



# DRAGON MAKEN WAR

BOOK 01

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# Dragon Maken War

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by

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# Synopsis

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220 years ago, in the legendary Dragon Demon War, Hero Azell ended the war by killing the evil Dragon Demon race's King Atein. He was able to save the population, but as a consequence, he was cursed. While he was dying, the high magician suggested a gamble that might save his life.

‘The Dragon’s hibernation is the only key to saving your life.’

Instead of a human’s sleep, he slept the sleep of the dragons and he was able to overcome the curse. Now he is realizing that he has slept way longer than a human’s life span.

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# Prologue

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The cunning Demon race deceived the dragons, who yearned for wisdom. This was how the Dragon Demon race was born. The dragon's strength and the Demon race's greed was coalesced inside the existence called the Dragon Demon race. They became an enormous darkness that stole the light from the humans, and there were heroes that fought against them.

Amongst the heroes, there was a knight named Azell.

He defeated countless numbers of the Dragon Demon race, and he saved many human lives. Finally, the Dragon Demon race's king Atein was toppled, and he put an end to the chaos that swept the continent.

And now, the hero Azell was dying.

“You should already know that magic is a skill that was originally gleaned from the Dragon Demon race. The Dragon race, who could not obtain wisdom, fell into the Demon race's temptation. Magic was born when both sides were integrated.” (TLN: Dragon x Demon mated)

The magician Carlos made a sad expression. He had gained a great reputation while experiencing hardships with Azell. During the process of battling the Demon Dragon race, they had experienced countless life and death situations and they had become best friends.

After hearing those words, Azell asked a question.

“Why are you telling me a story I already know? Tell me a fun story.”

In Carlos' memory. Azell was someone who shone brighter than anyone else. He was sturdier than anyone, so he couldn't even imagine his weakened state.

However, reality is often very harsh. In front of Carlos' eyes, he saw the once unimaginable sight of a weakened Azell in a sickbed. He was surprisingly thin and his complexion was white.

This was the cost of defeating the Dragon Demon race's king Atein.

He was the very first of the Dragon Demon race. Atein had tempted countless dragons to create the numerous Dragon Demon race. When he was falling under Azell's sword, he had casted a powerful curse. The curse's power ate away at his body, and it caused Azell to gradually weaken. Now he was about to die.

Carlos continued speaking, while holding back a sigh.

“First, listen to me. Magic is a highly difficult skill that not all humans could learn. The ignorant and simple warriors were able to apply the basics, and they were able to form the ‘magic used by the body’. That's what is called the Spirit High Order.”

“So what?”

Azell asked with a sour face.

He came for a visit, but now he was telling me everything I already knew. He didn't understand his friend's motive. Normally, he was a guy who loved to talk about various truths as if he was lecturing, but why is he telling him thing he already knew?

Carlos spoke up.

“The main point starts right now. The practitioner of Spirit Order uses magical forces in a different way. They are basically a different form of magicians. Moreover, they handle the magical force in the same way as the Dragon Demon race. It could be said that they are more intrinsically similar to them then the magicians.”

“That makes me feel bad. Why does it have to be the Dragon Demon race.”

The Dragon Demon race has the perception that they are the most outstanding beings in the world.

They were an existence that was fused between the mighty dragons, who were too smart to be considered wild animals, and the crafty demon race, who could not exist without having the human's soul in their hands.

Carlos laughed bitterly.

“However, we were able to go up against them with their own power. This is an undeniable truth.”

“So is there a point to this boring story?”

“Listen to me. The Dragon Demon race and the Dragons are different existences, but they couldn’t change their life cycle. Their life cycle is divided into periods of hibernation and activity.”

The dragons slept daily, but sometimes they would go into a long sleep akin to the animals who sleep in the winter seasons. This period is called hibernation. They go into hibernation when they used an excessive amount of energy during the active period or when.....

“They obtain a major injury.”

“That’s right. When they enter hibernation, they display an amazing amount of life force. In exchange for giving up their activity and entering into a defenseless state, they are able to treat the life threatening wound over a long period of time. The dragon’s hibernation differs from the animal’s winter sleep. It is an evidence of magical activity.” (TLN: sacrifice physical movement to increase use of magic to treat wound)

“You, No way.....”



Azell started realizing what the magician was trying to say. Carlos nodded his head as if to say his guess was right.

“I researched the Dragons and the Dragon Demon race by dissecting their corpses. In my mind, this is the only possibility in which you survive. The risk is very high but... Please trust me and put your life in my hands. I'll induce you into a state similar to the dragon's hibernation.

# Chapter 1 - Azell Zestringer (1)

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Azell vividly remembered the events before he started sleeping.

At the same time, he also realized that this happened in the distant past. His consciousness was asleep, but his unconscious body felt the flow of time brush by him.

He was asleep for so long that even when he opened his eyes his sense of reality was murky. He wasn't even able to differentiate whether he was awake or if he was still in a dream....

Koong... Ku-gwa-ah-ah-ahng.....! (TLN: Boom )

Azell was waken from his long sleep, because he heard sounds of explosion from a far away place.

It had been quiet the whole time he had been asleep, yet somehow there were occasional sounds of explosion and the earth shook. So in the end, he opened his eyes.

“Mmmm.....”

The problem was he had opened his eyes, but his body didn't have any strength. It even made him suspicious as to the fact that he was still alive. His consciousness felt like it was floating, and his body didn't respond to anything.

Azell calmed his heart. He was still breathing, and after confirming that his heart was beating slowly, he poured strength into his hand.

Ggum-tul.(TLN: sfx for twitching)

His fingers moved.

Ggu-mul. (TLN: another sfx)

His toes moved.

He hadn't moved his body in a long time, so it was stiff as a fossil. It was similar to an animal who had woken up from a long winter sleep. Its body would be half dead and it was the same for him.

Warm blood started circulating throughout his stiff body, and his vitality started waking up. His dead sensation was alive now, and he could feel air touching his skin.

After he started clenching his fingers and toes, he needed patience and effort to move visibly. After struggling for 1 hour, he was able to raise an arm.

‘Great. At least, I am able to move now. However.....’

He still had no idea where this was.

‘Carlos, you bastard. Where did you leave me?’

The surrounding was dark, so he couldn’t see anything.

The place he was laying down was soft like a bed, but he could easily tell that it wasn’t a large space. If he stretched his arms out, he could touch the wall that was keeping him sealed.

‘Maybe this is a coffin?’

By looking at the structure, he had a suspicion that he was put in a large coffin.

He was put in a coffin when he was still alive, so he didn’t feel that great. However, there might be a magical meaning to it. Azell thought about this, and he started looking through his memory.

He was the hero, who had defeated the Dragon Demon King Atein and saved the continent from despair. He was Azell Karzark.

However, he was dying from the curse put on him by the Demon King Atein, and his friend, Carlos, suggested that I go into a long sleep. It would be similar to a dragon’s hibernation, and the purpose of the long sleep was to defeat the curse.

To do this, one needed a powerful ritual. Carlos and several powerful magicians gathered in secret to perform this ritual. Azell’s memories ended there. Carlos was looking at him with a sad expression and then everything was black. Afterwards, he

remembered fragments of memory, but it might have been a side effect of wandering around inside his dreams. It wasn't an experience from reality.

Therefore, Azell didn't know where he fell asleep or what situation he was in.

‘First, I have to get out of here.’

He won't find anything out just by thinking about it. After deciding this, Azell tried to push against the lid of the coffin.

It didn't budge.

“.....”

He continued pushing against the lid of the coffin, and after a while, Azell lowered his arm because he had lost strength. By looking at the reaction, when he pushed with all his strength, it seems like it won't open just by blindly pushing at it from the inside. Maybe there is a magical mechanism that'll open it?

‘Ooh-ooh-ook(TLN:ughh). Carlos, you bastard, why did you do something this unnecessary!

Azell grinded his teeth.

It didn't matter that he was imprisoned here if he was still in the

magic induced sleep similar to the dragon's hibernation. However, now that he had awoken, it would be troublesome if he couldn't go outside. The air was ventilated so he could breathe, but wouldn't he die of starvation?

‘Ok. I’ll use my strength to open it and go outside.’

Azell closed his eyes and concentrated.

Originally, his body had unfathomable strength that exceeded the human limitation.

If he used that strength then he should be able to move the lid in one breath.....

‘Uh? What is this?’

Azell looked inside of himself and he was taken aback.

The Spiritual Energy that flowed within his body, which was the power that made him superhuman, was all gone.

‘No way... Did I use all my strength to maintain the hibernation?’

Animals would eat a lot before their winter sleep to supplement their nutrition. Then during the winter sleep, they would use all the stored nourishment before awakening.

Azell had experienced the same situation. He didn't know how long he had been asleep, but he understood that he had used all of his strength to maintain his life.

‘No, it isn't the time to be understanding!’

Azell increased his concentration, and he sharply refined it. If he didn't find a way to exit here, then he would starve to death. How funny would it be if he died here after he had successfully mimicked a dragon hibernation and also beat the curse?

‘Ok.’

Azell sensed the latent fragmented strength inside his dried up Spiritual Energy. With strong misgivings, he scraped it together. (TLN:he scraped together the latent power)

Du-gun.(TLN: Ba-dump.)

His heart was beating.

It was an evidence that he was still alive.

His heart kept on pulsing and the air he breathed in was circulated to the rest of his body through his fresh blood and vessels. He was able to maintain a state where his body was alive.

Moreover, the heart pulsing was a secret art the warriors used. It

was the source of the 'Spirit Order'.

Every time the heart pulses, the vibration would be spread to his body and it would stimulate the energy. Then the magical force that flows through the energy would receive the vibration

and it would be amplified. This in turn brings the supernatural strength.

'I think it is possible to do it one time.'

Azell succeeded in gathering the fragment of strength left inside his body, and he carefully evaluated it. It was a weak strength. If one only had decent skills, then the person would have no idea what to do with it. However, this was Azell. He could use the heart's pulsing and the vessels' vibration to amplify the energy. He'll be able to exert a large destructive force once. No matter how thick the coffin lid was, he has the power to destroy it!

'Let's do this!'

Azell opened his eyes. Then he spread all of his fingers.

It was right then.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-oong!

Suddenly, from the surrounding, an enormous amount of power



was inserted into Azell's energy! It was an enormous amount that exceeded what he could produce!

‘Kuk!’

If he wasn't careful, it was a situation where he could perish. However, Azell showed his amazing ability to adapt. He scattered the power he was about to emit. He started circulating the energy, and he mixed it with the newly injected power. Then he had to release it before it could wreak havoc inside his body. Both his hands started emitting a deep blue light. The bright light lit up the surrounding darkness, and it exploded upwards.

Kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa!

Accompanying the light, the air shook and the surrounding lit up brightly.

## Chapter 2 - Azell Zestringer (2)

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Kwa-ga-gwang!

Accompanying an explosive sound, a cloud of dust was formed. A giant hole was formed on the ground, and a blue flash was emitted. Following this, one shadow popped out.

Ku-goo-goo-goo-goo..... (TLN:rumblin' sound)

Then the earth collapsed and a large amount of soil filled the hole.

“Ooh-ook.....”

Azell moaned. He was almost swept up inside the collapse. After he destroyed the coffin's lid, he used his remaining strength to run outside. If he hadn't, then he would have been buried alive.

“Shit.... So... Deep.....”

When he was about to complain about the fact that he was buried so deep, instead of his voice, only his ragged breaths leaked out. His lips, inner mouth and throat was extremely dry, so it was difficult for him to speak.

While escaping, he had realized that he was more than 10 meters underground. However, there was a 3 meter gap between the

coffin and the ceiling.

Originally, he would have been able to only destroyed the coffin lid with his power and come out. However, the large amount of external power that was injected into his energy was a problem. The amount was so large that it destroyed the coffin lid, traveled through the empty space, and pierced through the thick wall of the underground structure, which was made out of stone. As if that wasn't enough, he blew away over 10 meter of the foundation.

Azell threw his body to the top.

‘What the hell is this?’

The timing of the inflow was unfortunate. If the person was someone other than Azell, he would have been destroyed after failing to hold it(TLN: soil) back.

“Ook.”

After Azell escaped to the surface, the sun light pierced his eyes, and it cause him to cringe.

Since he was asleep for a very long time, the bright sun light was like a beating.

Right now Azell was nude without a shred of clothing.

Like a mummy, he was very skinny, and he looked like a monster. The fact that he was able to move his body was an unbelievable sight.

In truth, even speaking was very difficult for him. He didn't have any strength, His lips were cracked and the inside of his mouth was dried up.

‘I have to find some water.’

It was imperative for him to eat something to replenish his nutrition. However, the more urgent need was water. Azell couldn't see what his body looked like. However, even if he didn't check, he knew his body was in a serious state. If he dropped dead, it wouldn't have been strange.

‘Why did I have to be in the middle of a forest.... Why the heck did he bury me in this place?’

After looking around his surrounding, Azell was in a dark mood. He was in a forest overgrown with trees. He was aware that this place may be rife with danger. In his current condition, even if he met one wild animal, he would be killed.

‘My life is now dependent on luck.’

Azell bit his dried lips. He barely raised his body and he started moving. He had to find water and drink it. Then he would replenish his nutrition by finding some fruits. Even if he was able

to recover his body by a little, he could somehow fill his energy up with magical force....

He carefully made his way forward while thinking this.

All of a sudden, a sound stimulated his senses.

‘There are people.’

Across the trees, he could hear the sound of people. He didn’t know how many, but a good amount of people were approaching his direction, while having a conversation.

‘Should I consider myself saved?’

Still, he couldn’t just consider this to be a fortunate situation. How could he know who was coming towards him? What if it was a group of bandits that treated human lives like the lives of flies?

While feeling anxious, he stared in the direction the people were coming from. Soon a young man wearing leather armor appeared in front of him.

The moment he saw Azell, he pulled back and spoke towards his back.

“There is a person here!”

Soon after, several men rushed into view. They all wore the same uniform.

‘Are they the regular army?’

He decided this, because they had the same equipments. Underneath the leather armor they also wore the same garments. They all wore a dark-colored military uniform.

“Centurion.”

After a few moments, one man came forward. His garments could be differentiated from the others. He was a curly blond-haired youth with a red tassel on his helmet and he wore a sword on his waist.

The moment Azell saw the other, he felt amused.

‘He’s pretty strong?’

The young man’s appearance did not go well with post of centurion. He gave off an impression of a good-looking young master, and his face was very youthful. His age must be less than 20.

However, the vibe he gave off was memorable. When he stepped forward, the soldiers naturally parted, and it wasn’t just because he was a centurion. This person was a practitioner of the Spirit Order. Without realizing it, he was leaking energy that was

overbearing for other people.

“He is a...person.”

The young man, who was named as a centurion, frowned after looking at Azell. Azell was unsightly so it was hard to even see him as a living person.

‘What can cause a person to be in such a state?’

Even if a person was disabled through starvation, would he turn out like this? If it wasn't day light instead on night, then he would have suspected an evil magic was making the corpse move.

“I am the Rulane Kingdom's Western Frontier Garrison's Centurion, Knight Giles Vince. Could you enlighten us with your identity?”

He still had a bit of a baby face, but his voice was disciplined. While thinking that the other's speech was very knight-like, Azell tried to replying back.

“I... am.....”

However, his voice didn't come out.

“.....”

Azell could only make a ragged breathing sound before he gasped. After seeing this, Giles spoke.

“I don’t think you are in a condition to speak. First, let us return to our camp. Is that ok?”

“Uh.....”

Azell tried to say it’s fine before he just nodded his head. After Giles confirmed that he could communicate with the other person, he sent a hint with his eye towards the soldiers.

Then two burly soldiers stepped forward and assisted Azell. Azell wanted to tell them he could walk on his own, but it was hard for him to take even one step.

‘Ah, I look like hell, for real.’

The soldiers helped Azell move towards the camp. Suddenly, Giles queried.

“Do you want to drink some water?”

At that moment, Azell’s eyes opened widely.

Water!



Ah, is there a word that resonates with such sweetness?

After seeing Azell nod his head, Giles opened the top of the canteen off of his waist, and he handed it over. After receiving it, Azell stopped himself after he hurriedly brought it to his mouth. Then he slowly and carefully tipped the canteen and drank the water.

“Ah ah ah ah.....”

It was what one would call a life-giving water. The moment the water drops hit his dry mouth, a shiver spread throughout his whole body. However, that lasted only a moment. He tried in his own way to drink it slowly, but the canteen was emptied in an instant. Azell looked at the canteen with regrettable eyes before he handed it back.

‘I feel a little bit better.’

His almost dead body wouldn't dramatically get better by drink just one canteen of water. However, a little bit of strength returned to his body, and his mind, which felt like it was about to faint, woke up.

“Th...ank....”

“Ah, it's ok. You don't have to speak.”

Giles stopped Azell, who was trying hard to speak. Then he asked

his subordinates.

“Does anyone have water left? I think one bottle is not enough.”

Immediately, the soldier next to him gave up his canteen. Azell was satisfied only after he had emptied 3 canteens from the soldiers.

After his long hibernation, his body was extremely short on nutrition and water. It was a miracle that there were enough blood left over to circulate through his vessels. His state clearly improved when he drank the water.

Moreover.....

‘Mmm. This should be enough.’

Spirit Order was a secret art that could make a human into superhuman. Azell had trained the Spirit Order to the utmost limit, and unlike normal humans, he could control what happens inside his body. He used this to maximise his efficiency of absorbing water, and his insides started to inflate rapidly.

While he was doing this, Azell and the soldiers arrived at the camp.

“Ah.....”

Azell's eyes became wide when he saw the camp.

It was an excavations site of a ruin. The middle of the forest was dug up, and an entrance leading into the underground was revealed. The surrounding was exposed, and they were in the midst of cutting away the ruin's walls.

‘This is why I was awoken.’

Azell realized that the sound that caused him to wake up was caused by their excavation efforts.

The ruin they were excavating was the underground building where Azell was sleeping previously.

Carlos has made this secret installation to preserve me during my hibernation.

‘How much time has passed.....’

Since the secret installation was being treating as an ancient ruin and was being excavated, he could surmise that a long time had passed. Maybe, it was way longer than what Azell could have predicted.

The foreboding feeling he felt when he woke up was getting stronger and stronger.

# 3

Soon Azell was lead to Giles' barracks, which was located in the corner of the camp site. Since he was a Centurion, he had his own personal barrack that was separate from his subordinates.

“Please sit here.”

After Giles gave Azell a chair, he handed him a blanket.

“Cover your body with this. Until I bring some spare clothes.....”

“Ah.”

Azell finally realized the fact that he was naked. His appearance had been so grotesque that they(TLN:soldiers) didn't care about it(TLN: didn't care he was naked), so Azell had forgotten about it also.

‘Shit. As soon as I'm awakened, why am I humiliated like this?’

Azell's face blushed, but it didn't show since he looked unsightly like a mummy.

Giles spoke.

“Since it'll be too hard for you to speak, just listen. While we

were excavating the ruin, an explosion was seen nearby. We went to scout the situation then we found you.”

The explosion happened when Azell tried to come out of the coffin. Azell was glad he made a ruckus. (TLN: since it brought the people to him)

Giles continued speaking.

“The excavation of this site is our troop’s important mission. Therefore, we need to know who you are and what you were doing in a place like this. Do you understand?”

His words made sense, so Azell nodded his head. However, at the same time, he was thinking about something else.

‘How should I explain this?’

He had no idea how much time had passed since his sleep, where this place was or who these people were. He was perplexed as to how he should deal with this situation.

‘First, I have to assess the situation....’

Fortunately, Giles didn’t seem like he’ll press Azell any time soon. It was because Azell’s terrible appearance looked too pathetic.

“First, show yourself to the army doctor then rest for a day. I hope you will accept my questioning next time.”

Azell nodded his head.

The army as an organization had a characteristic of treating outsiders like Azell with more roughness. It wouldn't be strange if they chose to do that.

However, he felt weird since they were treating him with such courtesy.

‘Honestly. This guy should be in an elite knight squad. Instead he is a Centurion in an army....’

Azell was sure that Giles was a noble. He couldn't act with such dignity and possess these courteous manners unless he was educated growing up from a noble family. Soon Giles' subordinate brought Azell some spare garments. It was a working clothes for the laborers, but in his circumstance, Azell was grateful. Next, Azell was guided towards the army doctor. Since it wasn't a battle situation, he was idly on standby. When the young army doctor looked at Azell, he was startled.

“What the hell? Are you sure he is a living human?”

## Chapter 3 - Azell Zestringer (3)

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Currently, Azell looked a lot better than before after he was re-hydrated. However, he still looked like a monster.

The soldier, who was guiding Azell, spoke.

“Centurion Giles wants you to give him check up.”

‘Check up?’

Azell tilted his head to one side. He had no idea what this word was.

Previously, he trained his ears to listen to the words spoken around his surrounding, and it was a common occurrence for him to not understand the words. The diction and intonation were the almost identical to what he knew. In his perspective, it seemed like he was persistently hearing a segment of a dialect, and within that he heard words he didn’t know mixed in it.

An example was ‘army doctor’. In Azell’s time, this post of army doctor did not exist in the army. A priest, who had learned the healing arts from the temple, followed the army around.

It was the same with the word ‘check up’. When a healer looked at a patient, there never was a specialized term for it. Therefore, whenever Azell heard their conversation, he had a strange delayed reaction as if he had a hard time understanding it. It was because

he was trying to guess the meaning of the words he didn't know.

‘What’s happening? Is it because I’m somewhere I have never visited before? Or....’

While Azell was thinking on this, the army doctor spoke.

“Mmm. Who is this person and where did you bring him from?”

“That is....”

The soldier sparked explaining the circumstances. The army doctor frowned.

“Did he get experimented on with some kind of black magic?”

After hearing this, Azell started thinking.

‘That’s not bad?’

He could say he was kidnapped by a black magician. He was experimented on and it was something akin to torture. This caused him to be in this state, and he couldn't remember who he was. He could remember his name, but everything else was fuzzy and fragmented....

It would be a good enough excuse. It should be way more



effective than giving the straightforward account of the truth?

The army doctor, who was looking at Azell with a bit of a frightful expression, put his hand on Azell's forehead. From the end of his hand, a warm light rose up and it was absorbed into Azell's body.

‘He is a healing expert.’

Healing experts are an existence that is considered to be a variant of magicians. Normally, they would accumulate specially made medicine inside their body, and they were able to combine it with magical force to manifest it.

‘I don't think he is a priest...’

In Azell's time, all the healing experts were the temple's priests and there weren't that many of them. However, the man in front of his eyes did not seem to have the occupation of a cleric.

‘Did a healing expert, who was not a priest, apply to the army and secure an appointment as the army doctor?’

It was interesting. Before Azell fell asleep, only the temple's priests could use the healing arts, so they were respected even by people of high status. However right now, this man was not treated that way.

Soon, the army doctor clicked his tongue.

“How is he alive when he is in such a state?”

The healing experts could tell the state of the other's body by contact. Moreover, they could provide healing power to treat wounds and diseases.

The army doctor understood the state Azell was in and it was a miracle that he was even alive.

Also, he was able to maintain consciousness and walk on his own. He defied logic.

After being dumbfounded, he spoke to the soldier.

“You. This person.... He doesn't need anything except water and also feed him something.”

“What?”

“He is in a state of extreme starvation. It is cannot say as to how he is able to maintain his consciousness. After seeing his terrible state, didn't you think about that?”

“That is... I was too scared to think about that.”

“I guess he does look more like a monster than a human.”

Azell was slightly wounded by the army doctor's words. They were calling him a monster, but his body had received the adulation of women once.

"Go to the kitchen and ask them to make something easily digestible. Something similar to a soup."

"Understood."

Also, bring it here since this person would have a hard time moving."

"Yes. However, he was able to walk here just fine....."

"So he didn't look like he was having a hard time?"

The soldier had nothing to say to those words.

After the soldier left, the army doctor spoke to Azell.

"Do you want to drink some water?"

Azell hurriedly nodded his head. Even though he had drunk a lot of water, it was still insufficient.

The army doctor spoke to him after seeing Azell carefully drink

the water.

“I don’t know who you are, but don’t over do it even if you have learned the Spirit Order.”

“.....”

“It’s scary, so don’t look at me that way. I’m a healing expert. I, at the very least, know what my patient practices.”

‘No, I didn’t look at you like that to make you scared....’

Azell had only looked at the army doctor with an amused gaze. However, the army doctor mistook it for a defensive glare.

‘How messed up am I.....’

Now he wanted to see himself at least once. Azell spoke.

“Large dish... Could you... give me some water....?”

“Mmmm? Why? No, never mind. I’ll give it to you.”

The army doctor stopped Azell from arduously answering back and he filled the wash basin with water. Azell flinched at the reflection he saw of his face on the surface.

‘Waa, I’m like a real monster?’

He felt like it was fair that he was being treated like a monster. He wanted to give praise to Giles’ personality, because he had treated him like a person from the first time he saw him.

‘Shit. Where did my body that was like a marble statue go to...’

He thought about how he looked like in the past, and compared it to his current appearance. He wanted to cry.

‘At the very least, my hair didn’t fall out.’

The red hair, even Azell fancied, was grown out. It was very disheveled, so it was ungainly.

The army doctor spoke.

“You didn’t know what you looked like?”

Azell nodded his head.

The army doctor spoke.

“Mmmm. I don’t know what you went through, but it must have been abnormally hard.”

Soon the soldier brought a hot soup. Azell took it and he started slowly eating it one spoon at a time. It was only soup, but every spoonful he ate brought changes to his body. It was a small amount of moisture and nutrition, but his vitality returned visibly.

The army doctor spoke after carefully observing his figure.

“I’m Rick Boran. What is your name?”

He was about to answer immediately, but he paused after a thought suddenly came to him. He put his hand on his forehead and frowned.

“Name.....”

“Yes. Name.”

“Azell..... Zestringer.....?”

“Azell Zestringer?”

“Maybe.....”

He answered vaguely because he wanted to give the impression that he was unsure about his memories. Moreover, Zestringer was his original last name. Originally, he was a commoner. After he had toppled the Dragon Demon King Atein, he was given the title of Duke Karzark for his accomplishments. Afterwards, he was called

Azell Karzark in public and private.

Rick questioned him.

“Maybe.. You aren’t sure about your memory?”

Azell nodded his head. Rick frowned.

“You must have been severely worked over.”

“Magician....”

“Mmm?”

“A magician.. me... I don’t remember much... but.....”

“Ah.”

Rick’s expression grew darker.

He said these words without thinking too much about it, so in reality he felt guilty. If Azell had really suffered what he said then it wouldn’t be something he would mention lightly.

Of course, this was what Azell was aiming for. Azell looked at the other’s expression, and he inwardly gave an apology.

‘I’m sorry. However, this is easier for you to accept it.’

Rick spoke with a sympathetic expression, without realizing Azell’s dark inner thoughts.

“Mmm. Please rest easy in this barrack tonight. I’ll ask the soldier to bring the dinner here. At this time, I can’t really do anything else for you.”

Azell nodded his head.

---

Azell ate two servings of soup and water that day before he went to sleep. Truthfully, he wanted to eat more, but Rick decided he shouldn’t eat too much. Even though he was still hungry, it would give him a stomach ache.

‘It’s a sensible decision so I can’t say anything.’

Azell was sure that he would be fine even if he ate way more food.

Although his energy had dried up, the body control he had earned through learning the Spirit Order was still there.

However, he couldn’t explain his situation, so he could only follow directions without saying anything.



However after just one day, Azell's appearance changed drastically. A little bit of life returned to the skin that was once dry and splitting. His body, which looked like leather over bones, filled out a little bit.

His body started recovering, and Azell monitored the exact situation of his body through meditation.

‘This is so frustrating.’

All the power he had accumulated before his sleep was gone.

The muscle he had trained with tenacity was all gone, and the overflowing energy he had a hard time controlling was all dried up. The rings of life, which was considered the foundation of those who trained in the Spirit Order, was all extinct.

‘Even the rings of life had disappeared.’

Even though his energy had dried up, he thought that his rings of life would still be there. However, in the process of maintaining the hibernation for a long period of time, the magical force that made up the rings of life was used.

How long has he been asleep? As time passed on, he became acutely curious about that fact.

Any ways, he had to start everything from the beginning. He had to fill his shrivelled up energy with magical force to give it life, and he had to construct the rings of life again. Only then would he recover his previous strength.

‘Still should I consider it fortunate that the curse is gone?’

Carlos’ prediction was correct.

Azell had imitated the dragon’s hibernation, and he had slept for a long time. He succeeded in overcoming the curse. His body no longer had the Dragon Demon King’s curse, which ate away at his life.

‘Yes. This should be fine.’

Azell didn’t expect anything more. He had already earned the benefit. He was curious about many things, but he decided to focus on one thing.

Immediately, Azell started retraining the Spirit Order.

The Spirit Order training involved forming mental images and one had to lead the mind and body into a constant state. (TLN: Form mental image of what you want, and try to sync the mind/body.) In this state, one will resonate with mana in the atmosphere to produce energy. This energy is used to fill the energy pulse.

Mana.

It was an energy source that was abundant in the atmosphere. The warrior's Spirit Order, and the magician's magic were magical force produced from resonating the mind with mana.

It was revealed that the mana reacts to a strong will. This in turn allows the energy to be changed into any form.

This was how a magician is able to cause various phenomena.

Ooh ooh ooh ooh oong..... (TLN: buzzing sound – like high voltage electricity humming through line)

The meditating Azell started to resonate with the mana. Rick was surprised, so he looked inside. Since he was a healing expert, he was also sensitive to the mana's movement.

“Is he training his Spirit Order?”

## Chapter 4 - Azell Zestringer (4)

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Magic and Spirit Order is a secret art that is not taught thoughtlessly to others, and no one trains in front of others. However, Azell knew about Rick's presence. He resonated with the mana without paying attention to him.

“Mmm.”

There was a faint ball of light that rose up in front of Azell as he continued to resonate with the mana. After seeing this, Rick instantly recognized what it was.

‘Is that a mana aggregate? He didn't have a single ring of life, so how was he able to create such a dense aggregate of magical force?’

The rings of life of a person, who had mastered the Spirit Order, was a representation of how much strength the person could use. As the number of rings of life increases, one could release more stronger power.

However, when Rick observed him, Azell hadn't properly activated his energy and he had no rings of life. So how was he able to make such a dense aggregate of magical force, which had materialized in a form of light?

If Azell had heard Rick's question, then he would have answered like this.

‘Even if I do not have the rings of life, my control over the magical force is high and this allows me to freely manipulate the magical force.’

Azell had already perfected the Spirit Order, and he had reached the highest stage before. Of course, he was unrivalled in manipulating the magical force.

The other practitioners would only absorb a portion of the power they had raised through the mana resonance. However, Azell gathered all the power into one place, and he supported it with both hands.

Then he drank it.

Ricks eyes became round.

“He ate...the mana aggregate?”

He had never heard of such an event. Azell had drunk the mana aggregate he had made as if it was water!

“Hoo-ooh.”

This caused a considerable amount of magical energy to flow into his dried energy pulse.

Azell circulated the magical force throughout his whole body’s

energy pulse. After it soaked in, he gathered the leftover power to draw a ring.

‘I won’t be able to do it in a day’

As expected, the job of forming the ring of life was tough. With this amount of magical force, he wasn’t even able to maintain the small origin that’ll become the ring of life’s circle.

Azell tried to raise the mana resonance again to form another mana aggregate, but suddenly the vision in front of his eyes spun.

“Oook.....”

He was sitting cross-legged, but he almost lost his balance. He was barely able to avoid from falling to the ground, and Azell realized his problem.

‘Shit. My body won’t be able to endure it.’

The condition of his body was so bad that he could only resonate the mana for a short period of time, and after receiving one magic aggregate he had reached his limit. Spirit order was a

secret art that strengthened the body through magical force. One had to train the body and magical force equally to see a synergistic effect. If one side is deficient then it’ll affect the other side too.

Rick spoke.

“Don’t over do it. Where did you learn to make a mana aggregate and drink it? I know the basics of Spirit Order, but this is the first time I have seen that method.”

“....maybe?”

Azell turned his head in puzzlement.

His attitude indicated that he didn’t know either. Of course, he was acting, but he had laid down a cover story earlier. So Rick just let it go.

Azell spoke.

“I have a request, army doctor Rick.”

“Mmm?”

“The meals tomorrow... Could you give me the normal amount?”

Azell was able to speak properly now. His voice was extremely hoarse, but he was able to articulate clearly.

Rick shook his head.

“No. Do you think your body could digest a normal meal?”

“I’m only asking, because I believe I can.”

“You only feel like that. You might defecate bloody stools.” (TLN: ew >.<)

“No, really. I’m unsure about my memory, but... I’m able to control my body through Spirit Order. I only went to the restroom once today.”

‘His body is in such a state that it may not be able to absorb all the nutrients.... Still that shouldn’t be normal?’

Azell spoke to the dubious Rick.

“First, I’ll eat tomorrow’s breakfast and I’ll stop if it is a burden. Please let me at least attempt it?”

“Mmm. Ok. However....”

Rick spoke with an unsatisfied expression.

“You are very natural at speaking casually to me?” (TLN: again korean has casual/respectful way of speaking. MC was speaking casually == no respect)



“Did I? By the way, didn’t you, army doctor Rick, do the same thing?”

“I’m someone even the army’s Centurions respect?”

“In the past, I also got special treatments. Maybe. Since I can’t really remember it.”

“Jeez.”

Rick clicked his tongue, but he didn’t say anything. In the first place, he didn’t have the personality to tie his neck in a noose over someone not addressing him with honorific.

‘Also, this guys is oddly familiar?’

At first, he was slightly afraid of the person who didn’t look like a human then he felt pity.

Now that he had heard some of his story, he was oddly familiar. This caused him to treat him in a very relaxed manner even if his appearance was like that.

After Azell saw his reaction, he smiled inside.

‘Fortunately, I’m able to manipulate the energies pretty well.’

It was common for a person to feel a unique feeling when one sees another person. The feeling could be called a normal impression. Some people are comfortable, some are threatening and some people's impression is so faint that one can't tell if the person is there or not.

When the practitioner of Spirit Order reaches the highest, one is able to control the energy that is emitted, and in turn, one can change one's impression. Earlier Giles was softly emitting an imposing feeling. This was the same principle. (TLN: he gave Giles as an example.)

Azell was able to utilize this technique. He intended to give off a friendly atmosphere with no pressure. Rick ate it up.

Rick complained.

“Sir Giles picked up a strange guy.”

He didn't call Giles a Centurion, but he called him 'Sir', which was an honorific for knights.

Azell thought this was strange, but he started asking a different question.

“Ah. Do you think I could ask you couple question?”

“Do you realize that someone in your position shouldn't talk like this?”

“I know I’m the one who should be questioned, but I can’t remember anything. ”

“I don’t know who you are but.... I bet you lived shamelessly.”

“I think so too.”

Azell laughed bitterly. If he wasn’t shameless, then he wouldn’t have invested an enormous amount of resources to save his own life by emulating the dragon’s hibernation. He wouldn’t have even attempted it.

‘Anyways, Carlos was chomping at the bits to do the experiment.’

Carlos did everything in his power to save his friend, Azell. However, as a magician, he probably felt ecstatic that he would be able to implement his methods. Originally, magicians are that kind of breed.

Azell asked a question.

“Where is this place?”

“We are with the Balan forest located in the Rulain kingdom’s western border.

“The Rulain kingdom....”

Now that he thought about it, Giles introduced himself as belonging to the Rulain kingdom's western border guards. At the time, he didn't have the presence of mind to pay attention to it, but now that he thought about it....

‘That country doesn't exist.’

According to Azell's knowledge, the country called Rulain kingdom didn't exist.

However, he did remember a figure called Rulain. Amongst the noble family of the Nadik kingdom, there was one called Duke Rulain.

Azell asked the most important question.

“By the way, what year is this according to the Atein calendar?”

Each country on the continent used the years since they were formed. However, there was a separate system called the Atein calendar. The magicians started counting the time since the Dragon Demon King Atein was destroyed and when the humans was freed from his threat. This method started being widely used.

Rick answered.

“It's the year 222.”

“Year 222? Did you say year 222?”

“Yes. Also, today is the 4th month 8th days.”

“Huh... No, wait a moment.”

Azell put his hand on his forehead, while making a shocked expression. The shock was too large that he lost the ability to speak for a moment.

“220 years.....’

Azell had fallen asleep 2 years after he had slain the Dragon Demon King Atein. According to Rick, 220 years had passed.

‘I can’t believe this.’

He had already guessed that he had been asleep for a long time.

Unlike other animals, the dragons hibernate for at least couple decades. Since the time he was awake, he had somewhat accepted the fact that he had been asleep for a very long time.

However, he would have never imagined that such an enormous amount of time had passed.

‘That explains it.’

He was sure it was the same language, but words he didn’t know was mixed in with it. It wasn’t because he was in a region where he never visited, but new words he didn’t know were formed after a vast amount of time had passed.

‘Everyone I knew... They are all dead.’

Azell was despairing when he heard a voice carefully asking him a question. This woke him up.

Rick was staring at him with a worried face.

Azell replied.

“Ah, I’m ok.”

“What’s wrong? Was it a memory related to the date?”

“A little bit.”

“What did you remember?”

“I think... I lost several years worth of memory.”

Azell lied about it.

The surprised Rick asked a question.

“How many years?”

“I’m not certain. However, the last date I remember was the year 218.”

Therefore, there was a 4 year gap in his memory. Azell decided to tell him this.

Of course, this was an event that would make one shocked.

Rick questioned.

“How old are you, Azell?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think I’m 30 yet.....”

“Yeah?”

Rick was surprised. Azell asked while frowning.

“Why are you reacting like that?”

“No, how should I say this. You don’t seem that old. When I look

at your appearance, I can't determine your age at all."

"Mmm. That's how it should be."

Azell laughed bitterly.

After the conversation, Rick went to sleep, so he also went to lie down on his bunk. Even though his body required sleep, he was up all night, because of the confusion and shock.

'Carlos.....'

He wanted to see his friend that he could never meet again. (TLN: Q\_Q)

---

The next morning Azell called after a soldier and they went looking for Giles.

It was morning, but Giles appearance was impeccable. He looked delicate, but he seemed to try hard to act with discipline.

Giles asked him a question.

"Have you eaten?"



“Thanks to you.”

After getting Rick’s permission, Azell was able to have a normal meal as breakfast. Rick was surprised at seeing Azell eat all the of meal that the soldier brought.

“You look way better than yesterday.”

“That I do?”

He looked scary since he was still very skinny, but his appearance was way more human-like compared to yesterday.

# Chapter 5 - Azell Zestringer (5)

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Giles spoke.

“I heard the approximate account from army doctor Rick. He said your memories are obscured....”

“Yes. It might seem like a lie, but I have no memories as to why I was there. I’m not even sure who I am.....”

Unlike Rick, Azell spoke respectfully towards Giles. He had heard from Rick that Giles was a noble that had received the title of knight. It was a situation where he couldn’t disseminate his identity, so he had to be polite towards the noble.

“Truthfully, I have a hard time believing it. However, the problem is every time I look at you the story becomes more likely.”

When Azell was found, his appearance was very grave. Even now he was still in somewhat of a critical state. The only way a human could have such an appearance and still be alive was for him to have been subjected to evil magical experimentation.

“At the very least, it doesn’t seem like you are a spy from a different country. I have decided to just let you go. However.....”

“However?”

“It isn’t a problem where I can make the decision. I’ll have to report to my Lieutenant and receive permission.”

The matter was a bit too sensitive for him to make a decision instead of his lieutenant.

Azell spoke.

“Mmm. Then let’s go meet the lieutenant right now and continue the story?”

“Unfortunately, it’s impossible right now.

“Why?”

“We came out of our fort to excavate the ruins. Moreover, the lieutenant returned to the fort to receive an important person. After couple days, he’ll return back here.”

“Then I have to wait until then?”

“Until you receive the lieutenant’s permission, you’ll have to stay in our camp without leaving it. I won’t imprison you, but it would be best if you don’t wander around. In your circumstance, this isn’t such a bad measure.”

Azell wasn’t healthy enough to wander around freely. Therefore, Giles told him it would be best to wait here, while being under

their protection.

Azell realized his consideration, so he nodded his head.

“I’ll do that.”

“Then please go back. While you are standby, stay at the medical barracks.”

“I understand. Ah. By the way, may I ask you one question?”

Azell asked as if he just thought it up, so Giles answered back.

“What is it?”

“Centurion Giles. You have 4 rings of life? At your age, you are already a Cord-Rope master and a knight of the army, so why are you a Centurion in the frontier?”

At his unexpected intelligence, Giles’ expression visibly hardened. At the same time, he emitted an offensive energy.

“How did you know that?”

For those who train in the Spirit Order, one gets a title of ‘Master’ once the ring of life reaches 4. The offensive energy emitted by those who reached the level of master was enough to

flatten a normal person.

However, Azell didn't show any signs of shrinking back even after he received the energy. He just shrugged his shoulder and replied back.

"I just asked about what I saw. I don't understand how I can see it either."

Of course, this was a lie. Azell had reached a higher level as a practitioner of the Spirit Order in the past than Giles. Whether it was magical detection ability or the ability to discern the opponent's fighting power, he was able to see through Giles' strength at one glance.

He decided to ask an antagonistic question towards Giles, because he wanted to learn information about this time period. If one was a Cord-Rope master 220 years ago, the person would be acknowledged as someone with great power. However, will it be the same in this time period?

After glaring at Azell for a moment, Giles retracted his offensive energy.

"...what army doctor Rick said about you being a Spirit Order practitioner was true."

"It's true."

“You don’t have any rings of life, or magical force but... I’ve had a vague sense that I can’t ignore you.”

It wasn’t as much as Azell, but Giles, who was a Cord-Rope master, was considerably adept at sensing other’s strength with his developed sense. The moment he saw Azell, he received a sensation that indicated he couldn’t be ignored.

Giles spoke.

“Anyways, you don’t have to answer that question. You don’t have any reason to answer it.”

“It is a sensitive topic, so I apologize.”

“It’s fine. You can go now.”

Azell nodded his head then he turned his body and he walked out of Gile’s barrack.

---

At the Balan forest’s ruin excavation site, the chef in charge of the meals was looking at an unbelievable sight.

It was caused by the transformation of one person. When he saw the person accompanying army doctor Rick Boran for the first time, he was surprised. The person was so skinny that he looked like a walking corpse.

While looking like that, the person ate an enormous amount of food, so the chef was astonished. He had eaten about 5 servings of food and 2 liters of water . The army was overflowing with men with robust appetites, but it was a whole different level trying to eat like this skinny corpse-like man.

However, the truly baffling part was his transformation.

He came to the kitchen to eat both lunch and dinner.

When he showed up for dinner, there was a suspicion as to the fact that he was the same person who showed up earlier for lunch. No matter how he saw it he was suspicious, but his superficial characteristics were certainly same as before. For example, he still had long red hair, and blue eyes. But the skinny corpse-like person had suddenly gained weight so how were they they suppose to interpret this? How can a human change so much in just couple hours?

‘Maybe it’s magic?’

He could only consider this thought as his customer, Azell Zestringer, went through an extreme change.

“Ah, is it because I was starving? Everything tastes like honey. But the seasoning is a bit strong.”

“You really eat well. Are you sure you are ok?””

Rick was sitting across him and he was shocked by the change.

He was almost unrecognizable. His weight had increased suddenly, so he looked more like a human.

Truthfully, Rick spent a full minute trying to dissuade Azell from eating more than 1 serving. Even after seeing him being ok after eating one serving, Rick still decided that he shouldn't eat more. However, Azell was stubborn and he ate 3 servings, which frightened Rick. Soon he rapidly recovered his human appearance.

Now he was continuously eating dinner, while he was receiving everyone's stares.

"I'm fine. I'm eating this much because my body requires it. To tell you the truth, I have to eat more, but I don't want to suddenly abuse the stomach and be sick. So I'm eating in moderation."

'This is eating in moderation?'

Rick was loss for words. Azell was already cleaning up his 6th serving. Moreover, he drank at least 3 liters of water.

"If you drink that much water then wouldn't you develop a stomach ache?"

"Usually."



“Then why are you drinking so much?”

“I am eating a large amount of food, so I have to drink enough water to digest it, and I need to rehydrate my body. Rick, do you know that most of the body is composed of water? My body was extremely weakened, so I have to eat and drink a lot to return to my normal state. ”

“...you seem to make sense for a moment, but the truth is you are talking nonsense. Even a healthy person cannot eat that much and be fine. You are in a weakened state. If you eat and drink this way then you could die....”

“I’m fine. Am I not ok?”

“.....”

Ah, is that right? The corner of Rick’s mouth twitched. He wanted to say a word as a healing expert with an education from the Medical Association, but he was overwhelmed after seeing Azell’s absurd change.

“Be that as it may, isn’t your rapid change absurd? After eating a lot, you just slept for couple hours?”

“Doesn’t it make sense if you considering the weakened stated I was in? Also, each person has different rate of digestion?”

“With all do respect, where in the world is a person with that kind of digestive ability? Are you a beast of endless starvation brought up from some demon world?”

“Eh-ee.(TLN: it’s a sound you make that signifies ‘whatever’) Originally, if a person who was weakened from starvation was fed well, then wouldn’t he be able to return to a human-like appearance in about four days? My situation is similar to that, but since I am eating more, the speed of the change is a bit different. ”

“No matter how I think about it, it doesn’t make any sense....”

“Ah, really. I’m fine.”

“.....”

“Stop saying it doesn’t make sense to something that has already happened. It happened in reality so accept it and analyze it. If you deny everything that diverges from your logic, then how will you be able to deal with unexpected situations?”

After saying this, Azell chewed on a seasoned vegetable. He had eaten all the food on top of his food tray, so he stood up with the tray.

“Are you done eating?”

“No, I’m going to eat another serving. Six servings is a bit unlucky. I’ll have to eat 7 servings, since magicians favor that

number.”

“.....”

“Mr. Chef is pretty skilled. It’s delicious.”

Without caring if he was flabbergasted or not, Azell started complimenting the chef, while he was scooping up the food. One of the chef approached Rick and asked a question.

“Who is that guy?”

“We were told to treat him as Sir Giles’ guest. Weren’t you all informed of this?”

“I had heard about him...”

“He must be a gluttonous monster captured by an evil magician. I’m sure of it.”

“What?”

“Just leave it at that.”

Azell was walking towards them while humming, so Rick pushed the chef forward.

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The Centurion of the Rulain kingdom's western border guard, Giles Vince, was deeply interested in the mysterious man named Azell Zestringer. Aside from how they initially found him, he was able to see through Giles' strength, which he was hiding, with one glance. He did this without having any rings of life, so his interest was inevitable.

‘How did he do it?’

He had thought about it since he let Azell leave, but it was a question that he couldn't solve.

He wasn't able to enter into the famous knight squads for personal reasons, and he had to enter into the army. While he was assigned to these remote locations, there weren't that many people who were able to recognize his true abilities. Most people assumed that he was a small fry who was promoted to Centurion based on his family's power. They assumed this without even getting to know him.

Even the knights in this place, who were hardened by fighting against monsters, thought the same thing. This goes to show how well Giles had hidden his true skill.

‘What is he playing at?’

He didn't believe a single word coming from Azell. The only thing that kept him from being suspicious was the state Azell was

found in was too appalling, so he thought his story sounded believable.

## Chapter 6 - Azell Zestringer (6)

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‘He a strange person.’

The fact that he was still alive looking like that was amazing, but if one paid close attention, there were other strange things about him. His accent was weird. He sounded like he was from a far away place, and his inflection was a bit different. At times, he would use old-fashioned vocabularies. Moreover, his reaction to spoken words were strangely slow as if he didn’t understand what was being said.

‘I don’t think his ear is damaged.’

Any ways, he was most definitely a practitioner of Spirit Order. He had a hard time believing it, while looking at his exterior, but he might be an expert who attained a relatively high mastery.

Giles asked his aide.

“How is he doing?”

“He hasn’t done anything out of the norm. After he ate, he went to rest. However, there was a surprising incident.”

“What is it?”

“I was told he has rapidly changed after eating lunch and dinner.

He used to be emaciated, but now he looks a bit skinny.”

“What? Really?”

Yes. Everyone is gossiping about it. They think it’s some strange magic.”

“That is curious. I should go meet him.”

“Should I go with you?”

“No, I’ll go by myself.”

After the conversation, Giles exited his office and he went towards the medical barracks, where Azell was staying.

“Army doctor Rick, it’s Centurion Giles. Do you mind if I enter?”

“Come in.”

After hearing Rick’s reply, Giles entered the barrack. However, unlike what he had expected, Rick didn’t greet him. He was distracted and he looking at the wrong place.

He followed the other’s gaze, and before he knew it, Giles’ eyes opened wide.

He saw the sight of Azell upside down with his shirt off. He was doing a handstand with one of his right finger, while three small round stones were stacked beneath his finger. In this state, he was doing a pushup.

In a couple hours time, his body had unbelievably filled out, but his body didn't show much muscle. Since he was so skinny before, his muscle tissues had died out. (TLN: catabolized muscle tissue)

It was surprising he was able to do this act with that body. After reaching a certain level as a practitioner of Spirit Order, one develops superhuman strength and sense of balance. Therefore, it wasn't surprising to see him doing a push-up while doing a handstand with one finger. However, he had stacked 3 small round stones on top of each other, and a small shift in balance would make the stones slip. He had never thought about doing this.

‘I want to try it.’

When Giles came in, Azell stopped doing the pushups, and he flicked the finger he was balanced on. This caused the 3 stones to scatter in different direction. His body turned in a circle and he was able to land his body lightly.

“Ooht-cha.(TLN:sound of exertion, like a grunt I guess)  
Centurion Giles..... No, should I call you Sir Giles?”

After hearing Azell's words, Giles was surprised again. Wasn't he entirely different from his morning appearance? His voice was different, but his blue eyes and the burning red color of his hair



was the same. If these physical attributes didn't match then he wouldn't have thought it was the same person.

Giles spoke, while hiding his unrest.

“Call me as you like. You aren't my subordinate.”

“Then I will call you Sir Giles. It's shorter.”

“That's fine. Any ways, that's a pretty fun training technique.”

“I had a memory of training this way. My body is in a rough shape, so it's difficult.”

Azell complained, while he looked at his body with discontent.

“How were you able to recover you body in couple hours?”

“I ate and drank a lot. If one provides what the body needs then the body recovers quickly.”

“It is hard for me to believe that is the only reason. When a person is weakened, one cannot accept a lot of food at one time. They would probably have to eat slowly and gradually recover their body?”

“Of course, one has to have enough digestive ability, and control

over the state of one's body. Sir Giles, you haven't experienced an extreme situation like me, but if you did, wouldn't you be able to do the same thing? Fundamentally, Spirit Order practitioners learn to control the rhythm of the heart. If so, wouldn't you be able to control the circulation of the blood or your sleep state?"

Spirit order uses the pulsation of the heart as the source of power. Every time the heart pulses, it vibrates the spirit ring and the resonance causes the magical forces to move.

If one learned the Spirit Order then he will have a technique that'll manipulate the beat of his heart. While standing still, if he wanted to, he could make his heart beat crazily fast or beat slow as if he is asleep.

Giles asked a question, while being amused.

"Do you mean to say you are able to extend the technique to manipulate your body to that degree?"

"Of course. If you can manipulate your heart's rhythm then you should be able to manipulate every part of your body. Unlike regular people, as a Cord-rope master, you should be able to use this method to control your body."

"You are right."

Giles nodded his head.

Even though he accepted it, the transformation of Azell was miraculous. He couldn't believe a human could change so drastically. Even if he was a practitioner of Spirit Order, wasn't this simply too amazing?

It had been a long time since his heart beat rapidly. Giles looked directly into Azell's eyes and spoke.

“Hmmm. Azell Zestringer, would you spar with me?”

From behind, they heard an intake of breath. Rick's face stiffened.

‘Is he out of his mind? Just this morning, he was about to die and now a knight is requesting a spar?’

He only thought this. As a healing expert, it would be unforgivable for him to say this out loud.

However, Azell smiled.

“Sure. If I face off against another Spirit Order practitioner then it might help me recover my memories. However, my condition is a bit of a mess so I might not be able to be a proper sparring partner?”

It's been 220 years since the period of time he was active, and he was curious as to how much the knights had changed. In what ways did the Spirit Order and sword techniques improve? Also, he

wanted to know what level of standards this period's knights had?

Therefore, in Azell's perspective, he wholeheartedly welcomed the sparring request by Giles.

"Of course, I'm not going to ask for an intense sparring session from someone who just got out from the sickbed. Instead of using the body, let us spar through showing appropriate techniques as a Spirit Order practitioner. Would that be ok?"

"If that is Sir Giles' intent then I'm fine with it."

Sparring didn't mean they had to fight with swords. There were other ways to battle. Spirit Order had various ways to spar.

Giles spoke.

"Then let us meet again tomorrow after lunch."

After Giles left, the frowning Rick asked Azell.

"You are really going to spar against Sir Giles?"

"Yes. I can move my body well, so there should be any problems?"

"Sir Giles is young, but his skills aren't ordinary. No one really

knows about it, but he isn't a joke. I'm warning you...."

"I already know about it. That is why I chose a sparring method where we can't hurt each other. So please stop worrying."

"Jeez. You are a patient, but you are being boastful in front of a healing expert."

"Do I still look like a patient?"

Azell curled both his arms to bunch his muscles, and he took a pose. However, his flesh was full of water so it didn't bulge at all. (TLN: flabby)

"....."

Rick started staring at him, so Azell looked away in embarrassment.

"Shit. Wait a few days. I'll show you some wonderful abs!"

"If gaining muscles were that easy, then all the men in the world will be muscular."

Rick snorted. Azell volleyed back.

"Do you think another person could gain this much flesh in one

day?”

“No one... probably.”

“I was able to do it. Within couple days, I’ll be able to bulk up.”

“.....”

Rick was loss for words when he looked at Azell’s attitude, which was full of confidence without any basis.

Azell smiled smugly while asking a question.

“So how old is Sir Giles?”

“He should be 19 this year?”

“He’s only that old? Ah, he does look very young, but still.”

“It hasn’t even been half a year since he joined our outfit. Still everyone acknowledges his skill.”

During that time, even though Giles was a Centurion, he participated in patrolling the Balan forest to learn about the troop’s work. He displayed himself to be an earnest person.

Then he showed excellent skills dispatching monsters, and his

fellow soldiers were impressed by his actions. At first, they weren't thrilled to have a rookie knight as a superior officer. However, they all had accepted him and followed him now.

“Our troops fight against monsters quite frequently so skill is valued. He was earnest and skilled, so he was immediately acknowledged.”

“So that's how it is. He has achieved a lot for a 19 year old. How is his skills compared to the other knights?”

“I'm not too sure about that. He should be around the middle. If he is able to act as the Centurion for our troops then he can't be average. The other knights aren't normal.”

Of course, they are like that. The troops constantly get threatened by monsters, and fight against them. (TLN: the knights are strong b/c they are constantly fighting near the forest)

Azell slightly narrowed his eyes.

‘I want to see the other knights... For his age, it is a great accomplishment to become a Cord-rope master, but I have no idea about this period's appraisal standard.’

In Azell's time, Cord-rope masters weren't rare.

The Dragon Demon king Atein and his army was a disaster that threatened the very existence of mankind. In front of them, the

humans had to struggle desperately. Numerous warriors died daily, and only the strong survived.

The lack of military strength forced many to share the secret techniques they had hoarded. If someone looked like he had some aptitude, then they freely shared the secret techniques.

The quality of knights became noticeably better than before the Dragon Demon War.

However, even in his time period it was rare to see a 19 year old surpass the level of Cord-rope master. According to Azell's memory, there were less than 10 people.

‘However, if I add one more year then the number doubles.’  
(TLN:19 vs 20 yr old)

That one year difference made an enormous difference.

‘Hmm. I guess I’ll have to find out about it slowly.’

He put away the question he was thinking about for a moment and he started exercising again. He used his other arm. Of course, he stacked three stones and while doing handstand with one finger, he started doing pushups.

Rick was struck dumb by this sight, so he started mumbling to himself.



“Jeez. You are doing some amazing things, but... Why can I only think of you as a weird guy?”

Azell could only laugh at his words. He resumed exercising without saying a word.

# Chapter 7 - Dragon Demon Princess (1)

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The Balan forest was not a land, where humans lived. It was placed on a map within the Rulain kingdom's boundaries, but in reality, the monsters that threatened humans lived there instead of humans.

That is why the Rulain kingdom's western border guard is not an army meant to fight against humans. They observe the movements of the monsters inside the Balan forest, and their goal was to protect the kingdom's territories from the threat.

However, there was a group of human in the middle of the forest. They weren't the western border guards, but they were human wearing suspicious black clothes.

"The person coming to the fort is Princess Arrieta."

"Is it the Dragon Demon Prince or should I say the Dragon Demon Princess?"

"Does it matter?"

"No. According to the rumors regarding the strength of the Dragon Demon Princess, we might not have enough members here."

They exchanged suspicious conversations. They didn't show any signs of being nervous even when they were in the middle of the

lands dominated by monsters.

“The Dragon Demon Prince debut was not too long ago, so I thought he would send her to a public function. I never expected him to send the Dragon Demon Princess to such a far away place.”

“Instead of the sending the Dragon Demon Prince to a far away Western borders, they must have calculated that it must be better for him to work on matters that appeal the people right now.”

“Hmm. Fortunately, the Dragon Demon Princess is not travelling with a lot people.”

“Then we will somehow find a way. Even if the Dragon Demon Princess is powerful, she is merely a young girl.”

All of a sudden, one amongst them asked a question.

“Is that ruin really the cursed Carlos’ ruin?”

Carlos.

He was a friend of Azell. It was also the name of a hero , and the most notorious archmage in recorded history.

Carlos’ magic was determined to be far away beyond the the average. He had died about 150 years ago, but the items he left behind was considered to be very valuable.

It was hypothesized that the ruins found by the Rulain kingdom's western border guard in the Balana forest was a ruin left by Carlos. After receiving this report, the royal family was surprised. They decided to dispatch Arrieta Vile Rulain, who was called the Dragon Demon Princess, and numerous magicians.

"We weren't able to confirm it. However, we are assuming it to be true."

"Still there aren't any decent magician in this place so there is a high probability that someone jumped to a conclusion."

"If this is Carlos' ruin, then we can't stay still. However, there is no need to act now, so let us wait and see."

"Of course. It would be a problem if they become suspicious."

---

He didn't move fast. He was moving very slowly and carefully. One step. He was concentrating on taking one step at a time. It was so slow that it could be considered yawn inducingly boring, but he slowly continued to send punches and kicks into the air. It was fascinating to see him able to maintain his balance while doing this action.

It was more amazing to see his entire body drenched in sweat as if it was raining. He looked like a person who had moved the most in this world.(TLN: translates awkwardly)

He didn't wear any cloth on his upper body, and it could be seen that the fine muscles, which weren't angled yet, were twitching. He move his whole body laboriously.

One could hear the muscles screaming just by looking at him.

“Hoo-oooh.” (TLN: exhaling)

How long has he been like that?

Suddenly, he released his stance while exhaling. He picked up a towel that was placed next to him, and he started wiping his body while mumbling.

“Ah, it's hard. Since my body is all messed up, it feels like I'm dying.”

“That is an interesting training method.”

After watching Azell train, Rick complimented him as if he didn't understand it.

Azell asked him a question.

“Is it really amazing?”

“Yes.”

“Which part? Why?”

“Can you really exercise just by moving slowly? I don’t understand how those movements could cause you to sweat so much.”

“The knights here do not train in slow chain and fast chain movements?”

“Fast chain?”

“That is... One has to repeat slow and fast chain movements to grasp the balance of the technique. Fast chain movement is the normal training, which uses quick movements. Slow chain is the opposite. One has to train very slowly to prevent the body from being under the mercy of strength, and this allow one to correct erroneous postures.”

“I’ve never heard of such training methods. Well I guess I’m not a knight, so it’s possible that I don’t know about it. However, it doesn’t look like a normal training method.”

“Mmm. I guess it isn’t something soldiers would use. Any ways, you are curious as to why I’m sweating so much?”

After Azell asked the question, he approached Rick. Rick suddenly felt an unknown feeling of danger, so he started backing

up slowly while cringing.

Azell smiled a suspicious grin, and he grabbed Rick's shoulder.

“Feel it yourself.”

Ku-kung! (TLN: sfx of pressure)

Suddenly a heavy sound started spreading.

No, he thought he heard it, but Rick was mistaken. In reality, no sound was emitted. He felt a pressure press down on his whole body, and it had created a vibration inside. He had confused this with sound.

“Kuk!”

Rick groaned and he fell onto his knees.

His body became heavy like a ball of steel. No, this was above and beyond that level. It felt like some power grabbed his body, and it was crushing him.

This was happening inside his body! He couldn't even stand up. The power caused it to be difficult for him to even move a finger.

Azell looked down on him and asked a question.

“Now you know why I was sweating so much?”

“This, what is this...”

“It’s my special training method. Try moving your body in that condition. It will temper you a lot.”

“Ooh, ooh-gu-gu-gu-guk.....” (TLN: moaning/groaning sfx)

“For your information, I injected enough energy for this method to last around 30 seconds. After that, it’ll end. Even if you are lying down, it’ll be hard for you to breath, so it would be better for you to clench your teeth and move a little. It would be better for you to counterbalance that power.”

Azell spoke in a friendly manner. He put on his shirt and he sat on the bed.

“Ku, Ku-ook.....”

After hearing those words, Rick’s body trembled and he used all his might to start moving. After he put strength into his arms and legs, he succeeded in moving a little. He felt the pressure on his internal organs lessen by a little bit.

‘He was training in this condition for about 1 hour without him ever swaying. This bastard is a monster!’



Rick was exhausted just by crawling on his belly. Azell had trained with this technique for an hour. In his words, he had trained in the Slow chain method. He was a Spirit Order practitioner without a single ring, so how could he exhibit such superhuman ability?

As if Azell had read his mind, he spoke.

“Hu-hut.(TLN: short laugh) It’s not that impressive, so why are you reacting that way? That was the level of pressure I am able to maintain constantly. I can produce a stronger burst from time to time when I need it. If I applied that level of load on you, then your body will break into pieces.”

“I, I think my body is already sufficiently broken?”

Rick couldn’t even talk properly, so he protested his meaning through his gaze. However, Azell was happily watching Rick struggle.

‘You evil spirit-like bastard.’

It felt like an eternity before 30 second had passed. The pressure that was pressing on Rick started slowly dissipating.

In a moment, Rick’s felt his body become light. He pressed his head to the ground and moaned.

“Ooooooooooh.....”

“How was it? Is it worth doing?”

“I’m, I’m going to die.”

“Even if you are an army doctor, you are still a soldier. Aren’t you a bit too weak? Shouldn’t you train regularly?”

“Shit. I’ve received the basic training.”

“Yet you can’t even endure that?”

“Eeeeeeeek!”

Rick grinded his teeth, and he pushed his body up. He glared at Azell and spoke.

“How are you able to endure such pressure with your weakened body?”

“Of course, I’m not enduring it with only my body. I am also using the magical force. I am trying to balance the magical force that unites the physical strength and Spirit Order at the same time. Any ways, I am able to grow muscles all over my body in a short amount of time.”

Spirit Order practitioners could control parts of the body that normal people can't control. Therefore, they are able to train in ways that can't even be imagined by a normal person. Azell's training method was like this.

After he tempered his body, Azell sat in the lotus position, and he meditated. Then a magical force aggregate, which was very dense that it almost emitted light, formed in both of his hand and he drank it.

‘Hmmm!’

His whole body's energy pulse activated. The energy that was flowing within it was weak, but it circulated without any blockage.

‘Still it is fortunate that I don't have to break all the blockage in my energy pulse from the beginning.’ (TLN: sounds like dantian concept)

Originally, the human's energy pulse isn't active, and it is blocked. While in the process of training Spirit Order, the energy pulse is activated, and one is able to break through the blockage. This creates a path that magical force will circulate through.

It takes a long time to be able to make the entire body's energy pulse be useful. This was one of the most important jobs of Spirit Order. Fortunately, Azell's energy pulse slowed down in function, rather than being blocked again.

‘At the very least, I was able to make one ring of life.’

The vessel at the very end of the heart gathered the magical force, and it formed into a small ring. He had gathered a highly dense amount of magical force, and he shaped its form. One had to continuously inject new magical force to stabilize it. One had to go through these steps to create a ring of life.

Right now it was in an incomplete state, and it was barely able to circle around the heart. However, it was important that Azell was able to make a stabilized ring of life.

It was less effective than directly circling it around the heart, but he was roughly able to imitate its function with the Spirit Order techniques. (TLN: he laid a foundation for ring, but it's incomplete. But using spirit order technique, he can mimic a stable ring. )

Azell spoke after he examined himself.

“Let us go eat.”

“You don’t miss a meal.”

” The three meal times are precious.”

Azell led the way, while humming.

---

Azell was able to devour 7 servings again. He had consumed food and drank water until his stomach was full. It was amazing that he didn't have a stomach ache. After he drank his fill, he drummed his hands against his stomach in satisfaction.

“Ah, I'm full. Now I know the real value of food after starving for a long time.”

“Now that you have gained some weight, do you need to eat that much?”

Rick was fed up with it so he asked.

Azell had gained a lot of weight compared to yesterday night. He should be close to his normal weight now.

“Mmmm. After today, I'll return to eating a normal amount. My body doesn't absorb everything so I do expel a lot of waste. If I want to build more muscle, then I have to gain more weight.”

“Well, it's no surprise, coming from you.”

Rick shook his head from side to side. Of course, Azell didn't pay attention to his attitude.

After finishing the meal, both of them headed toward Giles' barracks. Giles was listening to a report from his aide, so they

waited outside for a moment.

“Hmm. I made you wait.”

After the aide left, he motioned Azell and Rick to sit in the chairs.

Rick asked.

“Did the patrol find something?”

## Chapter 8 - Dragon Demon Princess (2)

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“No, not really. It almost disgust me that there is nothing happening.”

Currently, this ruin excavation site deployed 300 soldiers from the western border guard.

A large number of troops were dispatched, because this location was very dangerous. They needed enough troops to be able to excavate the ruins inside the Balan Forest, which was overflowing with monsters.

However, once the excavation started, the confrontation between the monsters was almost non-existent. At the most, only the patrols collided with the monsters? Since 300 troops were gathered at the ruin excavation site, none of the bold ones targeted them.

Giles spoke.

“There aren’t any problems, and this in turn makes me more worried.”

“Well, isn’t it pretty obvious since 300 troops are gathered in one place? Recently, didn’t we find the activation of a large power?”

Rick replied.

The western border guard utilized small elite scouting parties to grasp the situation inside the Balan forest. They were especially vigilant against the monsters gathering their forces in one place. Small tribes were fine, but if it gets bigger than that then a large force was sent out to cut the sprout of danger.

This was why they knew that there weren't any large forces of monsters around to threaten them. However, Giles shook his head.

"We can't be sure. We don't know what's living inside the depth..."

The patrols didn't travel around the entire region of the Balan forest. In the deep locations, there were danger monsters that was beyond their powers. Therefore, there was a possibility a danger was growing in places they couldn't patrol.

'For example, a dragon.'

It was an existence that was called the nature's strongest creature. They acted like a full stomached wild animal. They chose their territory deep inside the forest, and they rarely came out. However, whenever they decide to come out, there was a huge commotion.

Giles spoke.

"Should we start our match?"



“Sure. Where?”

“I have a place in mind.”

It was very hard to find a place in the camp site, where other's gaze wouldn't reach them. However, Giles didn't want others to see this spar, so he seached for a location that would fit their need beforehand.

This location was an empty lot where the tree that were cut from the forest were stacked. In the back, there weren't any people except the soldier on sentry duty a bit farther away.

Giles gave a suggestion.

“There should be no contact. What do you think about slowing it up 3 breaths?”

“That's fine.”

After replying, Azell blew a whistle inside.

‘Wow. They are still using the sparring methods devised by the old man Croix? If the old man knew this, then he would have loved it.’

Duke Croix Nidel.

He fought with Azell in the Demon Dragon war, and he was recorded in history as one of the greatest knights. He was a hero, who had killed several senior officers of the Dragon Demon army. In Azell's estimation, he was the greatest technician amongst the knights.

This is what Giles' words meant.

As the words state, no contact means they can't hit each other during the sparring session. One had to stop one's attack before it hits the opponent. The three breaths did not indicate strenuous exercise, but one had to slow down one's breathing by three breaths from one's normal state, and move slower. Instead of fighting with their body's abilities, they were putting an emphasis on reading each other's movements. This was why they purposefully slowed their movement down.

Both of them were sparring under these conditions. Giles asked a question.

“Which weapon do you want to use?”

“I prefer the sword, but I wouldn't mind a spear either. I think a hammer should be ok too, but it's not a suitable weapon for sparring?”

“In the first place, there is no practice weapon for hammers.”

Giles gave a bitter laugh before giving him a practice sword. After

receiving it, Azell identified the balance of the blade, and he started swinging it against the empty air.

‘It’s not working like how I imagined it.’

His body had somewhat recovered, but the sensation was vastly different from Azell’s memories. Azell swung the sword couple more times in the empty space, then he unified his mind and the body’s senses.

“Alright.”

His body was dull, so his sword form was not sharp. This wasn’t something he could recover instantly. The more important thing was to realize how much he could move, and he had to match his mental images to actual movements.

When one is recovering from a huge wound, one require a lot of time to fix the out of step image. He had continuously recovered his body since he woke up, so he succeeded in fixing this problem.

“Let’s start.”

Azell and Giles faced each other at a distance, where they could strike each other with a sword.

Azell didn’t wait too long. After they got into position, he matched the promised pace of ‘3 breaths’ and he started moving slowly. He stepped forward once, while thrusting his sword.

The battle was slow enough that Rick could tell what was happening. Their body's abilities were about the same, so the sparring was about the reaction when the swords hit. Moreover, they had to imagine how they would avoid the other's movement, while doing so.

This was a battle of body and mind.

In this case, it was the latter part. Spirit Order practitioners used the magical force to attack the opponent's sense.

Rick's body was normal, but he was a healing expert. He was able to see the movement of mana, and he also could identify the phenomena formed by magical forces.

That is why he was astonished when he saw the clash between the Spirit Order practitioners.

‘It's really showy.’

Their body was moving slowly, but the magical force produced by the Spirit Order wasn't.

There were fierce movements in a realm that could not be seen by a normal person. If one focused on the sense that detected the magical force on Giles and Azell, one could see three to four transparent lines emitted from their body.

These lines were of slightly different colors. The lines would draw the trajectories made by the aggregate of magical force. Each and every one of them were guided by owner's intentions, and each implemented a different effect.

It was impossible to know what the effect were. To Rick's knowledge, the magical force emitted by the Spirit Order practitioner most likely affects the opponent's mind.

“Mmmm.”

This continued for about 5 minutes.

Azell breathed heavily and he put his sword down. At the same time, the magical force he was using disappeared.

Giles wondered why.

“Why are you stopping?”

“I'm short on magical force.”

“What?”

“I have a very little amount of magical force right now, so I can't continue.”

Azell playfully raised both hands.

The current Azell's store of magical force was trivial. He had just formed an unstable ring of life, so it couldn't be helped. Actually, it was surprising that he was able to last 5 minutes against Giles, who was a Cord-rope master, with his minuscule amount of magical force.

After hearing these words, Giles did a double take.

"So that's how it is. Your technique was so outstanding that I didn't think about this problem."

Azell's skill as a Spirit Order practitioner was better than what Giles thought it would be. It was unbelievable that he was able to freely control the magical force to this degree when he had lost all his rings of life, and his energy pulse had dried up.

Azell spoke slyly.

"As a matter of fact, I used to have a bit of a reputation."

"I can believe it. With those skills, there is no way you wouldn't have a reputation."

"There is one thing that is puzzling me... Sir Giles, how good are your skills compared to the other knights?"

Azell indirectly tossed an important question towards him. He had directly tested Giles' skills, so his answers would go towards the data he would use to gauge the level of this period's knights.

Giles replied back.

"My skills isn't that great."

"Then are you saying I'm not that great either?"

"That isn't... the case."

Giles was being modest, and he was taken aback when it was pointed out by Azell. Azell stealthily eyed Rick, while speaking.

"I already know how skilled Sir Giles is, so I want to request a truthful evaluation from an objective person. Is that not possible?"

"Mmmm....."

Giles thought over it for a moment. He had been hiding the fact that he was a Cord-rope master from the others. Therefore, it was inconvenient for him to explain the situation where Rick could hear him. However.....

-May you promise you'll tell this to no one?

Spirit order practitioners had a technique called 'whispering', where one could communicate with others without talking. Unlike communication magic, this was limited to short distances, but it was commonly used to have a secret conversation.

-Of course.

Azell replied back with the same technique.

Giles spoke.

-If we exclude the level of expertise of techniques... Cord-rope masters aren't common. In the entire western border guard, there is only 3 excluding me.

-It is only at that level?

Azell was surprised.

'The average quality of the knights hasn't increased too much.'

No. Instead it might have decreased. These troops were in charge of a country's border, and they would experience live battle quite frequently. But they only had 4 Cord-rope masters.. During Azell's time period, Cord-rope masters were quite common. It was just hard to find someone who had reached that level at Giles' age.

'No, if I think about it there are only 4 'Cord-rope masters'.'



Those who had surpassed Giles weren't counted. The number of Cord-rope masters were small, but there might be more existence above or equal to Quadruple masters. If he thought about it carefully, the number of Quadruple masters in a troop should be a military secret. What Giles revealed were facts that could be found out easily by outsiders.

‘Still their techniques seems to have improved.....’

After sparring against Giles, Azell experienced new ways to use his skills.

The techniques the knights used in Azell's time was much simpler and cruder. It didn't mean all the techniques of the past knights were inferior. By isolating the techniques he used, he was able to get an impression of the complex and diverse advancements.

Giles's techniques were diverse and refined. In a short amount of time, he was able to know this truth.

However, Azell purposefully hid his skill. If he showed too much strength then he would become guarded. It wouldn't be a good situation for the current Azell.

Azell thought for a moment before speaking.

“Sir Giles, I have one request.”

“What are you requesting?”

“Until the problem of my position is resolved, do you mind if I work as a laborer?”

“Laborer?”

“The state of my body is fine. I feel bad about just playing and eating. Moreover, when I am free I would need some traveling money.”

“That is... You want to be paid for your work.”

“Haha. Yes.”

Azell laughed in embarrassment.

He told them he wanted to work, because he felt bad about just eating and playing. However, he was also asking them for wage. Even he thought he was being shameless.

‘I don’t have any money, so I have no choice.’

Humans need money to live. Azell was a world saving hero, but he was penniless. Also....

‘I need to look around the ruins.’

If he worked as a laborer then he could approach the ruins, where he had slept. If Carlos had left some kind of clue, then he wanted to know about it.

Giles spoke.

“I understand. It shouldn’t be too much trouble if I use my rank.. If you want, you can start working starting today. Except.”

“Except?”

“You have to spar twice a day with me. If it is morning and dinner, then you should be able to sufficiently recover your magical force?”

“If that is your request then anytime.”

Azell smiled and nodded his head.

## Chapter 9 - Dragon Demon Princess (3)

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From that day forward, Azell spent four days with the laborers. He joined them in the work of excavating the ruins. The job was mainly physical labor. Currently, the ruin's entrance was completely caved in, so no one could enter inside. That was why he had to dig near the grounds of the ruins. He continued to move the rubbles around the collapsed ruin entrance for several days.

‘Jeez. This was built for the sole purpose of protecting me.’

For the past couple days, he had been gathering information from the other laborers. He found out that the entrance to the ruins was completely sealed before Azell woke up. It was protected by a powerful magic, and the magicians were struggling to find a way to open the entrance.

On the day Azell woke up, part of the magic that was protecting the ruins failed and the entrance was destroyed. Did it happen at the exact moment Azell woke up?

‘Did he want me to stay in instead of coming out?’

Maybe he just had to open the coffin door instead of using his energy to get to the surface. If it was a facility initially built to protect the sleeping Azell then there should be things that would be helpful to him inside...

However, he had already exited so he couldn't do anything about it. He couldn't go back and excavate the destroyed grounds where

he first came out of, could he?

‘He must have prepared the magical force for me.’

Azell reviewed the moments when he woke up. When he gathered the strength to blow the coffin door open, there was a great amount of magical force injected into him from an outside source.

He wondered why such an event happened when he woke up, and he decided Carlos arranged it to be like that. When Azell woke up and disturbed the magical force, the mechanism allowed the stored magical force to flow into him. Carlos must have done this after predicting what Azell would do after waking up from his sleep.

‘He’s a meticulous bastard.’

Azell let out a bitter laugh, while thinking about his friend’s face.

While working as a laborer, Azell continued to train in Spirit Order. The excavation site only operated during the day, and the laborers rested during the night. In the morning and evening, he would have short sparring sessions with Giles and he would also talk with Rick inside the medical barracks. He didn’t have anything else to do, so he had plenty of spare time.

All of a sudden, Rick asked a question.

“So, Azell, why are you doing that?”

“Doing what?”

“Why do you make a magic aggregate and then drink it.”

Normal spirit order practitioners produced magical force by resonating the mana, and they would absorb it through their pores. Azell’s method of drinking the mana aggregate that was supported by his hands was too bizarre.

Azell turned his head in puzzlement.

“I don’t know?”

“What do you mean I don’t know....”

“What can I do when I can’t remember the reason? I just learned it that way. I think that is why I do it that way.”

“Jeez. Your amnesia is quite convenient.”

“I really want to remember.”

Azell grumbled.

Of course, his attitude was a made-up lie. He had a clear reason

why he was using this method.

‘It’s better to use this way to fill my energy pulse with magical force in a short amount of time.’

It couldn’t be said that Azell’s method is absolutely better than the normal method used by ordinary spirit order practitioner. In Azell’s situation, this method was better for him.

Normal spirit order practitioners received magical force through the pores of their entire body, and this revitalizes the energy pulse. At the same time, it works to strengthen the energy pulse.

However, Azell’s energy pulse had only dried up, and it didn’t lose any function. Therefore, he only felt the need to fill up his magical force. The goal was to only increase the amount of magical force. Instead of receiving the magical force across his body, it was way better to gather it in one place as a highly dense magic aggregate and drink it.

‘Normally, my energy pulse wouldn’t be able to receive it all and most of it would have dissipated.’

This was the reason why Azell initially made and drank the magic aggregate. By doing so, he was checking to see the state of his energy pulse. If his energy pulse was unblocked, then this method would be most effective.

Of course, he couldn’t continue to use this method indefinitely.

Although, Azell's energy pulse hadn't been blocked, it was a fact that it had shriveled up and weakened. Currently, he was expanding his energy pulse until the limit before he would combine it with the normal methods to strengthen his energy pulse.

‘At any rate... Let's do this first.’

After all the hard work, Azell was able to form one complete ring of life.

It defied common sense. However, Azell was not a Spirit order novice. He was a figure that had reached the highest realm. This was why he was able to zip through his recovery, while his energy pulse was unblocked.

He only had one, but he was able to obtain a ring of life. Now he would be able to better utilize the Spirit order. However, Azell wasn't satisfied by this.

‘It'll take some time, but since I've already come this far, I'll attempt the dual banding.’

Dual Banding was a new stage of Spirit Order he would have completed if he was never cursed by the Dragon Demon King Atein. The ring of life could be called the core of Spirit Order, where it has a set magical framework. The ring of life has a uniform thickness and it surrounds the heart. He could increase the number of rings by one, so the number of resonance with the heart beat increases. This was a way one could increase a spirit



order practitioner's strength.

There was a reason why the thickness was constant. It was the maximum thickness that allows the spirit order to take in the magical force's nature without it becoming unstable.

There was a physical limit to the surface area of the heart, so the exact number of rings of life one could have was fixed. Therefore, a spirit order practitioner reaches the final realm when one become a Decuple master(10 rings of life). There were no known practitioner who had reached this realm. Even Azell, who had defeated Dragon Demon King Atein, was an Octuple master(8 rings of life). To Azell's knowledge, the person with the strongest magical force was a Nonuple master.(9 rings of life.)

However, Azell came up with an extreme method where he made some changes. He layered another ring of life of similar length over an existing ring of life. Azell named this method as Dual-Banding.

Carlos estimated that this method would produce an exceeding stronger power compared to someone with the same number of rings of life.

The two of them ran simulations with magic for confirmation. They even made scaled models using animals as test subjects to confirm the result. However, he fell asleep before he could substantiate the result by using it on himself.

‘Right now is my golden opportunity.’

At the time, Azell had already formed 8 rings of life so it was difficult for him to make any more rings of life. After forming a certain amount of magical structure, it was hard to maintain it within one's body.

However, he was in a situation where he had to make all of the rings of life from the beginning. So it was easier for him to attempt the Dual-banding.

‘There are enough secondary data, but it isn't guaranteed that it'll work on my body. Still if I succeed... I'll be able to aim for a higher realm.’

Truthfully, Azell wondered why this generation of spirit order practitioner didn't use this method since it's been 220 years. By looking at Giles, he was able to determine this method wasn't used.

Azell fell asleep before he could disseminate this knowledge to the world, and he presumed no one had developed this method yet. Even if the knowledge was known, it was kept hidden and it wasn't spread widely.

Suddenly, Azell asked a question.

“By the way, Rick, what happens to the healers?”

“What do you mean by what happens. Of course, they learn about the art of healing.”

“No, that is... Wasn’t the healing arts used by the temple’s priests originally?”

“Long time ago, it was like that.”

“Long time ago?”

“Of course, there are some priest from temple who use it... Currently, there is a medical association that trains the healers.”

The medical association was an organization that was formed by combining the healers and the alchemists. The basics of healing arts consists of medicine, and it is made by the alchemist. So it was inevitable.

“Originally, each temple kept the recipe of medicine a secret until about 60 years ago? Sage Baion succeeded in producing the medicine by himself, so the situation changed.”

It wasn’t known for certain, but Baion held a grudge against the temples, who had kept the medicinal recipe a secret. It was surmised that he had lost a precious person, because of this.

Azell was in awe after listening to the explanation.

“So that’s what happened. The man named Baion changed the world.”

It was an event that couldn't have been imagined in Azell's time.

The healing arts was an important tool of the temple to leverage influence all over the world. Their techniques determined which humans live, so even the rulers couldn't go against the temples lightly. If certain religious body's forces were strong in a country, some corrupted temples would spread all kinds of diseases on purpose.

Baion was stuck between this tradition that was passed down for a long time yet he was able to stop it.

There were huge changes while he was asleep, Azell felt a really novel sensation. After waking up from his sleep, the world had changed so much?

Rick spoke.

"Well, this resulted in a path that allowed people like me to become healers and earn my keep. So I am very grateful."

"Being a healer is just a way to earn your keep?"

"Of course. Did you think I became a healer because of some noble intentions to save lives?"

"I guess not."

Azell realized that values had also changed, so he spoke while laughing.

Rick spoke at that moment.

“So Azell.”

“Yeah?”

“You don’t have any muscles yet?”

“That’s.....”

“You said you’ll make some bulging muscles in couple days to show me. I guess that didn’t happen.”

“.....”

As the words indicated, Azell hadn’t made much progress in developing his muscles. In the past couple days, he had rapidly obtained a body worthy of being called a human, but when he flexed his arms, there was only a little bit of definition.

“Hnnghh.”

Azell could only frown at Rick, who snorted as if he knew this would happen.

---

Dragon Demon Princess.

It was a title only one person could have within each generation of the Rulain Kingdom.

This existence was not a pure human, but a halfling who had received the blood of a cursed dragon, who was part of the dragon demon race. They were called Dragon Demons.

This singular being in the Rulain Kingdom is called the Dragon Demon Princess. The most famous person in the kingdom was going to visit the ruins found inside the Balan Forest.

After telling Azell this news, his reaction was far beyond what Rick could have imagined.

“What is a Dragon Demon Princess? The Dragon Demon race made a kingdom?”

Rick stared at him as if he was the most idiotic person in the world. Azell reacted angrily.

“Since my memory is fuzzy, it’s possible that I don’t know about her.”

“With all do respect, how can you not know about the Dragon Demon princess?”

“I really don’t know... I don’t remember anything even if I hear about it.”

“I’m at a loss for words.”

Rick clicked his tongue and he stared explaining about the Dragon Demon Princess.

“There is no way you don’t know about the Dragon Demon war?”

## Chapter 10 - Dragon Demon Princess (4)

---

“The Dragon Demon race wanted to take over the world about 200 years ago, so a war happened?”

“So you know about that. After the hero Azell Karzark defeated the Dragon Demon King Atein in the Dragon Demon war.....”

After speaking to that point, Rick glanced at Azell.

“Now that I think about it, your name is also Azell.”

“So what?”

“Moreover, Azell Karzark had crimson hair color too.”

“It can happen.”

Azell felt guilty inside, but his outer appearance didn't change. Rick spoke.

“No, I just feel sorry for the legendary hero, who has the same name as you. You are in a very sorry state.”

“.....”

“Well, there were a good amount of humans that sided with the



Dragon Demon race during the Dragon Demon war.”

The Dragon Demon King Atein gathered numerous Dragon Demons to conquer the world. He dreamed about an empire where the Dragon Demon race was held above every other race.

However, not everyone from the Dragon Demon race sided with him. Those, who didn't like Atein, claimed neutrality and some even sided with the humans.

Azell remembered them.

‘Now that I think about it they could still be alive.’

Dragon Demon race lived far longer than humans. Therefore, those from the Dragon Demon race he fought along side with could still be alive after 220 years. He should have thought about this possibility, but since he didn't have a grasp on the situation, it didn't even reach his thoughts.

Azell's heart started beating faster after he realized this truth.

Currently, Azell was trying to positively accept everything he saw, but in the corner of his heart, he was despairing. He was tossed into a unknown world by himself, and it was difficult for him to endure the loneliness.

However... There were others who might have been alive during his time, even if they aren't humans. This fact planted a seed of

expectation in Azell.

‘However.....’

Not too long after the Dragon Demon War ended, Azell retreated from the public eyes. The reason wasn’t known to the public, but his health had deteriorated rapidly from the curse of Atein.

Therefore, he was in the dark as to how the world operated after the Dragon Demon war ended, but he was able to find out about this truth.

The public sentiment turned against those from the Dragon Demon race, who had cooperated with the humans.

‘What happened afterwards?’

Even though they had fought with the humans, they were still from the Dragon Demon race. The Dragon Demon war instilled an unimaginable amount of fear and animosity towards the Dragon Demon race.

Rick’s story was talking about that part.

“After the Dragon Demon war, the Dragon Demons, who chose to help the humans, had no choice but to retire from most of the world. Then there were the half-breeds who had inherited their blood....

In other words, the persecuted Dragon Demons made trouble in various places.”

“.....”

So that’s what happened.

Amongst the Dragon Demon race, there were those who had fallen in love with humans, so they had sided with the humans. While they were treated as comrades during the war, they were denied from becoming members of their society.

‘No, even then....’

Even during the Dragon Demon war, they were isolated. They weren’t treated as true comrades, but a tool with great power. The humans couldn’t trust them, but they were treated as useful betrayers.

That is why the Dragon Demons treasured the relationship with those who came to them with open heart like Azell and Carlos. They wanted to trust the world, but it was only filled with animosity. It was very difficult for them to keep faith.

Rick continued with his story.

“The situation changed after some time had passed. The Nadick

Empire was in decline, and Duke Rulein couldn't stand the tyranny that was spreading inside the war-torn empire. He gathered the surrounding lords, and they combined to form the Rulein Kingdom. Of course, after the Rulein Kingdom declared independence, the empire responded with military force."

The Rulein kingdom's war of independence was the start of Nadick Empire's demise.

However, even if the Nadick Empire was impoverished by war, they were still the strongest in the world. From the start, the Rulein Kingdom was faced with desperate crisis.

This was when Duke Rulein made a bold decision.

The decision was the Dragon Demon race. He decided to ally with the Dragon Demon race, and the mixed-blood Dragon Demons. By giving them social status and a chance to live a decent life, the Rulein Kingdom was able to get their hands on a very powerful force in return.

"He had to marry a female of the Dragon Demon race to confirm their will. The following monarchs must also mate with someone who had inherited the blood of the Dragon Demon race. This law was made to preserve the blood of the Dragon Demon race in the Royal Family. "

This was how the existences called the Dragon Demon Princess and the Dragon Demon Prince was formed. They were the living symbol of the alliance between the humans and those with Dragon

Demon blood, who were living alongside each other.

“Since they cannot succeed the throne, it is impossible for them to threaten the royal authority. Until the new generation is born, they are required to fight for the the throne. That is why they are everyone’s hero.”

“So that’s how it is....”

Azell was having fun listening to the history after he had bowed out.

He learned about what had happened to the Dragon Demon race after the Dragon Demon war had ended. His chest hurt from hearing about the collapse of the Nadick empire since it was his home country. However, he had a deep impression of the Ruelin Kingdom because of how they treated the Dragon Demon race.

‘In the end, they exchanged the right to live in the human society for the strength of the Dragon Demon race.’

If he was cynical then he would interpret it that way. He needed to find out more information, but Azell didn’t think his guess was wrong. The fact that humans and Dragon Demon race cannot co-exist without such an arrangement made Azell feel a bit bitter.

Azell queried.

“So why is the Dragon Demon Princess coming here?”

“Of course, it’s the ruins.”

“Huh?”

“It might be the ruins of Arch Mage Carlos. It is a possibility, so the Dragon Demon Princess was dispatched as the leader of the research team.

“Arch Mage Carlos.....”

Before Azell fell asleep, Carlos had numerous titles. However, he wasn’t called an Arch Mage since he was still young.

However, 220 years had already passed and he was recorded into history as a great man. Azell laughed bitterly at that fact.

---

There is only one Dragon Demon princess in each generation of the Rulein Kingdom.

The current Dragon Demon Princess’ name was Arrieta Weil Rulein. She was two years older than her sibling, the Dragon Demon Prince Seiga Weil Rulein.

“Mmmm.”

Arrieta had fallen asleep for a brief moment inside the royal carriage, and now her eyes opened.

She was still a 17 year old girl. Currently she didn't have any armor on, so it was hard to see her as an existence, who had gained her fame in the battlefield.

Her long silver hair was partly braided beneath her ears, and her eyes were like yellow jewels that glowed of sunset. Her skin didn't have any blemish, and her ears were slightly pointed like a fairy.

Above her left ear, there was a bluish feather-like horn protruding, and it looked like it was sculpted from snow. If someone who didn't know saw it then it could be mistaken for a unique accessory.

Accompanying the horn, she had two gems embedded on her hands, which gave away the fact that she wasn't completely human. The gems were colored the same as her yellow eyes.

There was a blurry shadow energy inside the gem named Dragon Magic Stone. It looked like a dragon's eyes, and the pupils were slit vertically. It gave off an eerie feeling as if a dragon was staring at you.

After staring at a blank space, she suddenly spoke.

“Enora.”

“Yes.”

The young servant sitting next to her was named Enora. She was around 14 years old. She had curly red blond hair with bright green eyes. She looked like a cute doll.

Arrieta queried.

“Have we arrived yet?” (TLN: All her speeches are very formal.)

She spoke in an antiquated way. Enora replied back.

“I heard that we are almost there.”

“I woke up for no reason. However... What is it?”

Arietta gave a slight frown. Enora queried.

“What is wrong?”

“I thought I felt someone’s gaze...”

“Someone’s gaze?”

“It just felt like someone was watching me. I woke up, because it got on my nerve. So sleep well.”



Arrieta closed her eyes again. Then she fell asleep before 3 seconds had passed.

Enora laughed awkwardly.

“I’m not allowed to sleep.....”

The carriage was running slowly, but it wasn’t comfortable since they were on a forest road. However, Arrieta slept as if she was sleeping on top of her mattress inside her room.

After Enora watched Arrieta sleep like a doll, she shifted her gaze outside the window. There were only two of them inside the carriage, so she was bored. If Arrieta was a normal girl then she would have passed the time gossiping, but she was definitely not normal.

‘Still my Princess, how can you sleep so much?’

Enora had become Arrieta’s exclusive maid only 2 month ago. At first, she was very nervous at the fact that she was the exclusive maid to the Dragon Demon Princess. Moreover, Arrieta didn’t show any emotion in front of other people, and her speech was very antiquated. She was very overbearing.

However, after spending a lot of time with her, those sentiments were all gone. She found out Arrieta had a very loose personality. It even made her doubt if Arrieta was a high born.

‘No matter what she doesn’t wake up.’

She frequently fell asleep during the day, so in the servant’s perspective, she didn’t have to walk around on eggshells.

Enora was bored so she was looking out the window, while wiggling her toes. Suddenly, the noise outside became loud. They must have arrived.

“Princess. Princess.”

“....oong?”

She started whispering in her ears, and Arrieta opened her eyes. She looked at Enora with sleepy eyes, while asking a question.

“We have arrived?”

“We’ll arrive soon.”

“Then let me sleep a little bit more....”

“You can’t.”

“Why?”

“You said you can’t go out with sleepy eyes?”

“...did I say that?”

Arrieta tilted her head. Enora nodded her head furiously.

“You told me to stop you from falling asleep again.”

“Is that right. Mmm. Oh well. Please tidy up adequately.”

Arrieta yawned and she closed her eyes.

Enora moved quickly. She brushed the princess’ tangled hair, and applied make-up near her eyes after washing them. Then she handed her the clothes that was hanging next to her. Her outerwear was styled like a uniform, and she quickly helped her put on a coat. Even though she was young, she had the skills to be an exclusive maid to the Dragon Demon Princess.

Unless it was a social event, Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta didn’t wear dresses. The clothes that was similar to a uniform was comfortable to move around in. The coat had a white back ground with blue flame patterns, and it was a magical item made specifically for her.

Soon a knight outside the window spoke.

“Princess, we have arrived.”

“I understand.”

The voice that had answered the knight didn't have a trace of sleepiness. The voice was mature and dignified.

Not too long after Arrieta had replied back, they had arrived at their destination.

Arrieta spoke.

“Truthfully, I thought we would get ambushed at least once coming here....”

“Yes?”

Enora's eyes widened in surprise.

They had traveled from the castle to the fortress of the western border guard. Then they left the fortress to the site of the ruins in the Balan forest. Their trip was very peaceful. Since there were a lot of people, the bandits or creatures didn't dare to attack them lightly.

As a reference, about 30 people were dispatched by the royal family. There were 20 soldiers, who escorted the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta. The rest were magicians, scholars, and servants.

Arrieta spoke.

“It is none other than the Balan Forest. I had heard that it was a very dangerous place, so I surmised that there would be at least one confrontation. Unexpectedly, nothing happened.”

“Isn’t it better that nothing happened?”

“Yes. I’m just saying.”

Arrieta descended from the carriage after finishing those words. Then suddenly her gaze turned towards a single location.

“Mmm?”

(TLN: Description can always be tricky and hard to visualize. This pic shows the blue feather like horn above her left ear. )

# Chapter 11 - Dragon Demon Princess (5)

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Someone was watching her from the construction site.

Of course, there were many gazes. The moment Arrieta stepped off the carriage, several dozen gazes focused on her. However, she was agitated by a single gaze amongst them.

‘Dragon Magic?’

Dragon magic was a power only the Dragon Demon race had. As a mixed-blood of the Dragon Demon race, she had this power and it’s characteristic was different from a human’s magic.

However, she could feel someone here with Dragon magic staring at her.

‘No, the feeling is a bit weird.’

The scent of Dragon magic was in the air, but her head tilted in confusion. Was it really Dragon magic? She could feel a very faint feeling of Dragon magic layered on top of human magic....

Arrieta felt unsure, while looking at the main character.

A youth with long red hair tied behind his back was watching her with blue eyes filled with curiosity.

---

Azell was surprised the moment he saw the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta.

Azell was human, but he was able to sense Dragon magic. He was an existence, who had fought and defeated numerous Dragon Demons. In the process of doing so, he was able to master a portion of the Dragon Demon race's power.

When he looked at Arrieta.....

‘Why is the Dragon Demon race's dragon magic so strong in her?’

After listening to Rick's explanation, he thought that the blood of the Dragon Demon race would be weak in the Dragon Demon Prince and Dragon Demon Princess. However, when he looked at Arrieta, the amount of Dragon Magic she was emitting was no joke.

‘If she has that much then she might be comparable to a pure Dragon Demon?’

While Azell was being surprised, Arrieta looked towards Azell. She correctly looked towards Azell, who was among numerous workers.

Both their gazes intermingled in the air, and magical energy was emitted. Then....

Arrieta appeared in front of Azell at a frightening speed.

‘She’s fast!’

She crossed the distance of 50 meters in an instance, while forcing her way through the crowd! A normal person couldn’t even see her at that speed.

‘She uses the Instantaneous Movement method pretty naturally. The young miss is considerably talented.’

The Instantaneous Movement method was a high speed movement skill used by Dragon Demons and Spirit Order practitioners. In a normal person’s eyes, it looked as if she had teleported and appeared in front of Azell.

The past Azell would have realized what was happening earlier by a wide margin. However, his senses and physical abilities was weak, because his body held only a small amount of magical energy. In the past, he could have grabbed Arrieta with time to spare, but her movement felt too fast right now.

‘I almost attacked.’

He was barely able to suppress his reflex to attack. Azell blamed his own immaturity, then he looked at her.

Hu-oooooooooooo.....!



Her movement cause a gale to form. Arrieta's long silver hair and her coat with the white background and green symbols fluttered. While inside the gale, Arrieta stared at Azell with eyes filled with curiosity.

“You...”

Finally, Arrieta opened her mouth.

“Dragon Demon... You aren't one?”

Her head tilted in confusion.

The difference between a Dragon Demon and a human becomes very apparent when one compares their body's characteristics. Moreover, it wasn't that he didn't have any special characteristics, rather he seemed to have lost the power even if he had the blood of the Dragon Demon race.

However, she could sense a weak scent of Dragon Demon magic. Arrieta knew no instance where this should be possible.

“Princess!”

The others ran towards her belatedly.

However, Arrieta didn't pay any attention to them. She asked

Azell a question.

“Who are you?”

“I’m working here as a laborer. My name is Azell Zestringer, princess.”

Azell took into consideration that his opponent was a princess, so he spoke politely.

Arrieta’s eyes became round.

“Laborer?”

“Yes.”

“You are?”

“Yes.”

“Even though you have Dragon magic? You are doing manual labor?”

“I’m sorry, but I have no idea what you are talking about.”

Azell feigned ignorance.

At the same time, he was surprised inside.

‘This lady’s magical detection ability is totally like a dog’s nose. How did she know?’

Azell had hidden the flow of magical energy that was emitted by his body. Also, his power had been exhausted, and he had only recovered only a little bit. There shouldn’t be any fragrance of Dragon Magic from him. However, Arrieta was very sensitive, so she was able to detect it.

At that moment, Giles approached and asked a question.

“Princess. I am the Western Frontier Garrison’s Centurion, Giles Vince. May I speak?”

Since Arrieta’s status was so much higher than anyone here, Giles’ behavior was cautious. Arrieta nodded her head.

“I’ll allow it.”

“What is your business with this man?”

“I was looking at him, because I thought he was a Dragon Demon.”

“Mmmmm.”

Giles was stunned, so he looked towards Azell. Azell made an expression that indicated he didn't know anything.

Giles spoke.

“Couple days ago, he was released by an evil black magician after he was experimented on, and we rescued him. The shock from his previous experience caused him to lose his memory, so he doesn't remember much about himself.”

“Mmmm?”

Arrieta was surprised by those words.

“This forest has a black magician?”

“We haven't confirmed it yet.”

After hearing Azell's story, Giles ordered his patrol to investigate if there were any traces of the black magician. However, he didn't have much information so far. The monsters inside the forest were a given, but it would be a big problem if a magician was cooperating with them.

Arrieta looked at Azell with suspicious eyes.

“Hmmm....”

“Of course, it would be difficult for the princess to believe this. However, when we found him, he was in such a bad shape.”

Giles defended Azell. Arrieta looked at Azell for a moment before speaking.

“Centurion Giles. Bring him to me later.”

“Understood.”

After Giles lowered his head, Arrieta turned around.

Azell grumbled inside.

‘This is going to be problematic.’

Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta. She was an unwelcome presence to Azell.

---

Afterwards, Arrieta accompanied them to the excavation site. Truthfully, she came here as a symbol representing the fact that the royal family treated this matter with importance, so she really didn't have much to do here.

After receiving the news, Rick whistled.

“Azell, I heard you received a hot stare from the Dragon Demon Princess?”

“...how could you characterize it like that?”

“Every is talking about it. What was the reason? I’m curious.”

“Mmm. I don’t really know. She just approached me suddenly and asked if I was a Dragon Demon?”

“What was she looking at to cause her to think that?”

Rick was dumbfounded. As a healer, he obviously knew about the special characteristic a Dragon Demon possessed.

Azell shrugged his shoulder.

“I don’t know? There must be something only the Dragon Demon Princess can identify. However, she didn’t seem too sure about it.”

“Hmmm...”

“Anyways, it puts me in a bind. I don’t really want any attention.”

“You shouldn’t talk like that.”

Rick laughed as if he couldn't believe what he was hearing

Everyone was paying so much attention to Azell that everyone here already knew about him.

The initial circumstance of his discovery and the extreme changes he went through after couple days of recovery made people doubt that he had suffered from any nefarious magic.....

Azell laughed bitterly.

“I guess.”

If he knew it would turn out like this then he would have recovered more slowly.

‘I was too hasty.’

However, Azell had no choice, but to be impatient. His body was in a mess, and he was thrown into a distant era by himself. It was inevitable that he would become obsessed with recovery, which in turn will allow him to protect himself.

Currently, this resulted in him looking very fit. He had gained considerable meat on his 180cm frame, and the past couple days of training resulted in his arms starting to take definition....

His hair was roughly grown and he hadn't shaved yet. He looked bedraggled so his appearance wasn't that pleasing. He was in this state on purpose, but if he had a wash and a brush up, then Azell would be a tall and handsome youth. (TLN: 6ft is average height in US, but considered tall in Korea)

Rick spoke.

“Anyways, it might be a good opportunity?”

“What do you mean by good opportunity?”

“For a change, the Dragon Demon Princess is eyeing you. If you make a good impression then you might be able to become her servant.”

“I would decline being a servant to the royal family.”

“You don't even know who you are, and yet you are talking high and mighty.”

Azell bitterly laughed at the words tossed by Rick.

It was right at moment.

“Mmmm?”



Azell ran outside of the barracks when an ominous echo stimulated his senses. Rick was taken aback, so he asked a question.

“What are you doing suddenly?”

“Rick.”

“Yeah?”

“Alert the others.”

“About what?”

“Enemies. It might be monsters coming here. They are coming in incredible numbers.”

Rick was taken aback. The excavation site had many soldiers patrolling the grounds. He hadn't heard any news from the people who are used to fighting against the monsters of the Balan Forest. So what was he saying?

Azell lowered his body, and he spoke while touching the ground.

“The ground is ringing.”

“What are you saying?”

“It reverberates like this when many march in one direction.”

Azell had experienced the Dragon Demon war, so he knew of many ways to detect the enemies' movements.

He was able to separate the vibrations, and one more thing...

“They are using magic to hide their appearances, and suppress the sound. Even the magical wave was hidden, but they forgot to hide the hive mind(TLN: group thought). No, maybe they didn't know they had to do it?”

Azell spoke while looking at a far away place.

He was someone who had trained the Spirit Order to the extreme, so he was able to see them. He saw the maelstrom of apprehension emitted by the gathering of numerous monsters. Every creature who can think emits apprehension(TLN: misgivings...its a direct translation. I'm guessing every organism capable of thought emits a negative energy). If one was alone then various nature's energy hides the apprehension, but when numerous beings are gathered in one place, then it coalesces into a clear presence.

This was hive mind. (TLN: the direct translation is group thought but it sounded weird)

In Azell's generation, it was common sense to hide your hive

mind when ambushing one's enemy. However, it wasn't the case in this generation. That may be, because a person who can read the hive mind was rare or non-existent.

Shuiiiiii.....

Right then a flash of light flew up into the air on the other side of the forest. Since it was mid-day, it was faint, but it was definitely a magical flare.

Qua-ga-gwang! (TLN: boom!)

The light flare flew in an arc, and it fell at the heart of the camp and blew up.

This was just the starting point as more flares started flying. The laborers ran away while screaming and the soldier were put on emergency alert.

“It's an ambush!”

“They have a magician!”

From across the camp, the army of monsters revealed themselves. The roaring monsters ran forward, and it caused dust clouds to form.

Shuiiiing.....!

Again, another flare of light flew into the air. However, something several times faster than an arrow flew towards the camp. This happened the moment the ball of light exploded.

Puh-ung! (TLN: collision/explosion sound)

Something blocked the explosion in mid-air. The destructive power was weaker compared to the initial explosion.

Beyond the explosion, the figure of a girl with silver hair swirling around her was revealed.

The people who saw her figure hanging in mid-air shouted.

“Dragon Demon Princess!”

On the ground, Azell started moving.

“I’ll leave the direct conflict to the miss... I guess I should earn my keep? Rick!”

“What?”

“Hold on to this.”

Azell handed a wooden log to Rick. Rick was confused so he

queried.

“What is it?”

“It is a protective item that’ll guard you. Don’t lose it. Take it and hide. You have to treat the injured. If you get hurt then I won’t be able to face the criticism.”

After Azell said this, he ran into the rising dust storm.

# Chapter 12 - Dragon's Shadow (1)

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TLN: I think I have to make a clarification. The author uses Yong-ma-juk and Young-ma-in. Youg-ma = Dragon Demon. Juk = tribe/race , In = being/human. I used Dragon Demon race and just shortened the second term to Dragon Demon. However, they are two different factions. Yong-ma-juk is the pure mix between Dragons and Demons. Yong-ma-in includes the pure mix who defected and the offspring of humans and the Dragon Demons.

---

In a flash, the excavation site fell into pandemonium.

In the initial ambush, couple dozen lives were extinguished. They were in a defenseless state, so the continuous explosion of the powerful magic resulted in a lot of damage.

Also during the confusion, the monsters were able to completely mask their presence and now they were pouring out.

The trolls had a relatively high intellect, so they would lead ogres from the central cluster. The group included a large ogre-like humanoid species, Blood Wolves, Gray Bears and other beast-like creatures.

This caused mass confusion to unfold. The soldiers that were running back and forth couldn't properly deal with the monsters. Additionally, there were increased casualties when they were swept by the monsters.

Arrieta took action at this moment.

She blocked the monsters' path while holding a pure white blade with a curved hilt.

“I command you! Earth, rise up and sweep them away!”

Qwa-qwa-qwa-qwa-qwa!

The ground in front of her turned over, and the monsters in front of her was buried.

Arrieta jumped up on top of the wave of dirt. Then she shouted, while pointing her sword in the air.

“Rain of Stone, pour down!”

Within the wave of dirt, numerous stones flew out into the air and they fell like rain. It was sped up with Arrieta's magical energy, so it brutally pierced through the monsters' body.

Afterwards, Arieta spun her body as if she was dancing, and she swung her sword.

“Evil darkness, split!”

A pure white light emerged along the path of the sword. It split

everything in front of it for 30 meters...

Poo-hwa-ah-ah-ah-ahk!

All the monsters simultaneously fell down, while spraying blood. After a delay, the trees fell, because it was also cut. (TLN: classic scene where blood sprays and after a second the tree slides down also)

The spirit of monsters, who had caused the chaos amongst the humans, was broken in a breath.

Arrieta shouted.

“Commanders! Organize the battle line!”

After hearing those words, the commanders put their mind in order, and they started to collect their troops. After seeing their response, Arrieta tried to use a large scale attack again. However, an aggregate of darkness flew towards her, while crawling. (TLN: guessing the outer skin was of the ball was rippling/crawling)

Qwa-qwa-qwa-qwa-qwa!

Arrieta swung her white sword to block it, and the darkness dissolved into pieces. The pieces resembled a myriad of leeches, and it started bubbling with smoke and foul stench when it touched its surrounding.



It was at that moment.

Jjak-jjak-jjak-jjak-jjak..... (TLN:clapping sound)

In the middle of the battle field, an incongruous sound of applause rang out.

Amidst the thick smoke produced by the explosion, a person came walking out. He wore a black robe, and beneath his hood, a veil of magical darkness was covering his face. The veiled person spoke.

“Indeed, you are the Dragon Demon Princess. You are so valiant that I am having a hard time believing that you are a girl. If someone told me, you had commanded in battle since birth then I would believe it.”

“Who are you? I can see that you are a Dragon Demon.”

“Yes. Although, I am a mutt compared to you.”

The man elegantly bowed like a noble. On top of his hands, he had gems that looked like Dragon’s eyes akin to Arrieta. The embedded Dragon Magic Stone had a murky green color to it.

Since he displayed his Dragon Magic Stone, it was evidence that he wasn’t trying to hide the fact that he was a Dragon Demon. For

a moment, Arrieta glanced at the man, who was emitting a powerful magical wave from his whole body, before she asked a question again.

“I’ll ask again. Who are you?”

“Unfortunately, I cannot answer that.”

“Then.....”

Arrieta raised her eyes. At the same time, a translucent light wave spread with her at the center. Her silver hair started to flutter in the air.

“I will not ask any more.”

She pointed her sword forward and shouted.

“Emanate, Rage of the Dragon!”

Puh-uh-uh-uh-ung!

The transparent blue power shot forward, while distorting the air.

She delivered a blow that couldn’t be blocked. By the time the hooded man reacted, everything in front of him was pierced at a

speed greater than light.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....!

Belatedly, the air within the path was sucked in, and a strong gale vigorously blew the dust into a thick cloud.

For a moment, there was silence on the battle field. One person was able to wield a destructive power that was comparable to a natural catastrophe. Both the humans and the monsters were all frightened.

Pul-luk.....!

The sound that broke the silence was the skirt of Arrieta's coat fluttering in the wind. She turned around with a stoic face.

However, it was at that moment.

“Princess, it hasn't ended yet!” (TLN: he said “Princess” in honorific but “it hasn't ended yet” was spoken in a casual way like how you speak to someone in equal standing)

The urgent shout made Arrieta pause in her steps. For a moment, she felt an odd sensation when she heard the warning. The warning was all messed up with the honorific. Right then a black sword burst up from the ground.

Che-eng!

It was an ambush that took her entirely by surprise, but it was stopped in front of Arrieta's body. However, it wasn't Arrieta, who had blocked the attack.

"That was close."

It was the blue eyed man with the roughly grown red hair and dirty beard. He had cut in with perfect timing, and he had blocked the ambush aimed at Arrieta.

"Azell Zestringer?"

Arrieta was so surprised that she spoke his name.

He was Azell.

Azell grinned and he looked at the princess before speaking.

"Princess, I'm sorry but....."

"Huh?"

"Could you clean this up for me? I don't have much strength, so it's hard for me to maintain this."

Azell's arms that was blocking the black blade was shaking. He had blocked the ambush, but he was having a hard time suppressing the surging power.

Arrieta grasped the situation, so she responded immediately.

“Earth, flip over!”

Ku-gwa-ah-ah-ah-ah!

The whole ground flipped over, and a large amount of earth and sand flew all over the place.

From inside, the man in black robe jumped out. It was the Dragon Demon, who had confronted Arrieta from before.

Arrieta wondered.

“He was able to dodge at that moment?”

“I’m also a Dragon Demon, so I do have some talent.”

The man shrugged his shoulder. (TLN: it implies he shrugged his shoulder with pride)

Azell clicked his tongue.

“Aren’t you embarrassed that you are boasting about a trick to an innocent princess?”

“What did you say?”

“You merely tricked our eyes with an illusion, then you dug yourself out of the ground. The technique that allows you to move freely underground is decent.”

“.....”

The man flinched at his words. He couldn’t see the man’s face, but Azell was able to sense that his opponent was agitated. Azell smiled broadly and he started goading.

“I don’t know who or where you are from... It isn’t good for you to boast, while trusting a cheap trick.”

“You weak bastard is talking trash, because your perception is decent.”

At the same moment he spoke, Azell hopped backwards. The surface of the ground was pierced by a black blade. Previously, the man used the same magic to create a blade, and he had ambushed Arrieta.

“You only know how to ambush?”

Azell snorted. He focused his mind, and his energy pulse vibrated.

Bu-dump! (TLN: Du-gun in korean)

His heart pulsated.

The vibration reached the ring of life and it resonated. The magical force that was circulating along his energy pulse started resonating with the ring of life, and it started amplifying. The vibration caused by the process started vibrating the blood vessels, and it was transferred into his muscles. This in turn amplified the energy more and it returned to the ring of life to pulse once.

This all happened within the time it took for the heart to beat once.

Before the 2nd pulse could happen, Azell had pulled his magical force up to his maximum output.

“Hup!”

Azell’s body shot forth like an arrow.

His previous move was fast, but his movement right now was on a different level.

This was the Instantaneous Movement method that Arrieta had

used earlier. In a moment, he accelerated faster than an arrow, and he appeared couple dozen meters in front. He proceeded to to kick the ground and jumped obliquely. Then he stepped on a branch, and flew into the sky.

The man ridiculed him after seeing this.

“Foolish!”

He knew Azell was a Spirit Order practitioner at one glance. Moreover, the amount of magical force he had was subpar. Currently, he was fast enough to catch him off-guard, but that was it. Once he jumped into the air, it was the same as begging him, a magician, to cook him.

That was what he thought.

Pu-ook.

“Uh....?”

He froze in place, because he was surprised. The moment he tried to attack Azell, who had jumped into the air, he felt something sharp stabbing him.

“What the heck....!”

His abdomen was pierced by a short knife. Did Arrieta move? He



was taken aback, so he forgot about the situation he was in. He looked towards her, but even she had a surprised expression.

Then.....

“Ha-ah-ah-ah!”

Azell’s shout broke through his mental barrier, and a violent wave of negative energy exploded.

It was like a roar of a lion, which overwhelms herbivores. It wasn’t a simple shout. Inside the shout, it contained negative energy which attacked the mind like angry waves.

Thoughts could be scattered in an instant. If one broke the train of thoughts then a fatal weak spot arises.

Qwa-ha-haht!

Azell didn’t miss this chance in the air, so he swung his sword towards the man’s face.

---

“Kuk.....”

Azell made a face after he landed past the man. The reason being his sword was cleanly broken.

“This is why orc’s swords are unusable.”

Azell threw away the broken sword, while complaining. He had defeated an orc with his bare hands amidst the confusion, and he had taken away that sword.

“Of course, he had a companion.”

Even though Azell had lost his sword, he spoke as if he wasn’t intimidated at all.

His gaze was focused on another person. This person had appeared like a ghost. She(TLN:refers to the person in a gender neutral way-but I’ll just go with She) wore a black cape, and the magic of darkness formed a veil underneath the hood. The person looked like the first man that showed up earlier. She had a Dragon Stone on the back of her hands, which had a bluish tint, and one could tell that the person was also a Dragon Demon.

“You’re pretty good.”

The voice that leaked out of the veil was a very hoarse female voice.

“Ku-ook.....!”

The man groaned in pain next to the woman. There was a knife

buried in his abdomen, and there was a long rip in his veil of darkness, which was covering his face.

Azell felt some regret inside.

‘If I was a bit faster, then I could have ended him.’

Before Azell’s sword attack could find its mark, the woman casted a magic of protection on the man. Since he only had a trifle amount of magical force, Azell couldn’t pierce through the shield and his sword broke.

However, the man didn’t escape in one piece. His veil of darkness was ripped, and one could see a long wound on his face dripping with blood.

“You bastard. You are an inferior human yet you dare....!”

“Someone from a Dragon Demon race might say that. However, it isn’t a dialogue a Dragon Demon would say.” (TLN: Dragon Demon race  $\neq$  Dragon Demon)

Azell snorted.

It was a line he had heard from the Dragon Demon race in the Dragon Demon war until he was fed up. The Dragon Demon King Atein wanted the Dragon Demon race to rule over the world, and they believed that they were the most outstanding existence on the face of the world.

However, it felt new since a Dragon Demon was saying the same words. Maybe this generation of Dragon Demons had a superiority complex like the Dragon Demon race of the old?

“I’ll kill you...!”

“Stop.”

At that moment, the woman raised her hand and she held him back. The man, who was in a frenzy, stopped as if his actions were a lie.

The woman was disgustingly calm. Azell spat out, while looking at her.

“Four, no... Is it five?”

“.....”

“Is that right, Princess?”

“I don’t know.”

Arrieta replied back. Her expression was stiff, and cold sweat was flowing down.

Hidden powerful beings were checking her out. Each of them might be inferior to her, but she wasn't sure if she could take on this many.

Azell had noticed the invisible confrontation. Therefore, he didn't say anything to her even when she did nothing while he fought. (TLN: I guess if she helped then the hidden people would have attacked both Azell and the princess. )

## Chapter 13 - Dragon's Shadow (2)

---

The woman spoke.

“That is surprising. You can sense our presence?”

“You guys hid your Dragon Magic and it's quite brilliant. The princess didn't know about you guys in the beginning, because of it.”

“How did you find out?”

“I have no reasons to reveal my funds.” (TLN: it's an analogy, you don't tell others how much you have in the bank)

Azell laughed fiercely.

It is a stupid act to tell your opponent any information about yourself when you are fighting. Even if you think it is useless information, you have to hide the information about yourself. You never know what will help you survive.

The woman spoke.

“What a hateful man. You are a Spirit Order Practitioner, but you speak like a magician.”

She spoke while looking at the knife buried in the man's

stomach. The woman nor the man who was stabbed in the stomach knew how it was done.

Of course, Azell knew it since he was the attacker. It was a very simple trick.

In a single moment, he exploded his power to cause the enemy to be cautious. While he accelerated his speed, he caused confusion by executing fancy moves. At the same time he ran forth, he had used a concealment spell to hide the knife and he threw it. The opponent didn't realize this, and it had pierced him. It didn't have anything to do with the dynamics of power. (TLN: it basically means the method he used didn't have anything to do with how much power he has)

He had confused the enemies' senses. He used the concealment method without them knowing then he mixed his throwing motion within his other movements. It was a frighteningly polished technique.

Azell evaluated the situation inside.

'There are five opponents with this much skill. I think it is impossible for us to face them all.'

In the past, if he encountered this situation then he would have gotten through it while laughing. However, he was too weak right now. He was able to catch the enemy off guard a moment ago, but in a proper fight, he didn't have a chance.

‘It makes me want to sigh. This happened so suddenly. I thought peaceful days would be waiting for me after I woke up after 220 years.’

Azell lamented on his own fate. The Dragon Demon War shook the world 220 years ago, and he had to fight with his life on the line since his childhood. He fought for the future when he would be able to stop fighting and welcome the peaceful days. This ardent desire allowed him to wade through the piles of body and lakes of blood he made.

However, the end did not bring peace, but despair. He had gambled to escape a hopeless situation, and the cost required him to be thrown away by the world he remembered. He was exiled to the far future.

Even if it was just that, he would have felt sorry for himself and wept. However, this ordeal was shoved into him not too long after.

At that moment, the woman spoke.

“Let’s retreat for now.”

“We’ve almost captured them, but you want us to retreat?”

“How can you say that when you are in such a state?”

“Kuk.....!”



The cold woman's words shut the man's mouth.

The woman spoke.

“When one hunts, one has to do it at one's leisure. The enemy's fighting power is unknown, so until we find it out, let's torment them.”

As he was backing up, Azell asked her a question.”

“Hey, young lady.”

“...young lady(TLN: Miss)?”

The woman mumbled as if she had heard something quite bizarre.

Azell replied back with another question.

“Do you prefer madam?”(TLN: Mrs. the term author uses indicates an older woman usually married, depends on how you use it you can imply the woman is over the hill/unattractive)

“No, I prefer to be called young lady.”

“Then I'll call you madam.”

“.....”

“I have no reason to satisfy your request since you are my enemy, right?”

“You are really a detestable man. It has been awhile since someone has tried my patience to this degree.”

The woman’s hoarse voice was still steady, but the magical vibration she was emitting became rougher. For a normal person, one would feel tormented by the stifling pressure, but Azell just smirked.

“If you don’t want to be called madam then at the very least, you could tell me your name?”

“Is your name too famous to be revealed? Well, you are worried enough about your identity being revealed so much so that you are wearing a mask.....”

“Regina.”

The woman with the hoarse voice spoke.

“I’m the Dragon’s Shadow Regina. It is a name that was forgotten by the world, so it will be useless for you to look for any clue.”

“Dragon’s Shadow must be the name of your organization.”

“Yes. Now it’s your turn.”

“Mmmm?”

“Reveal your name.”

“Unlike you guys, I’ll gladly reveal my name. It is Azell Zestringer.”

“Azell....”

Regina showed some interest.

“You have an ominous name.”

“It’s ominous?”

“Yes. Just for having that name, it is ominous enough for you to deserve death.”

“You are speaking nonsense.”

“I don’t have a hobby of remembering the name of someone who became a corpse.... Against my will, I won’t be able to forget your name now.”

Then Regina hid her figure. The man was about to follow her and disappear, but he spoke in a rumbling voice, while glaring at Azell.

“I’m Dragon’s Shadow Kirion. Remember it. It is the name of the man, who’ll kill you in the most excruciating way possible.”

“I don’t want to remember it, so why don’t you fight me now? Are you afraid of me even though I am unarmed?”

“.....”

Kirion was in a rage, and he started emitting chaotic forces, but in the end, he went away without attacking Azell.

Azell clicked his tongue.

“He is more cool-headed than I thought. If he flew into rage and attacked me then I could have ended him....”

Azell threw his hands up after he spoke. Arrieta was surprised after seeing this.

“By the way...”

“Huh?”

“Where did the sword pop out from?”

Somehow, Azell was already holding onto a blade. Azell shrugged his shoulder.

“I had it from the beginning.”

“What?”

“I was merely hiding it.”

From the start of his intrusion, he had two swords. Anything can happen in the middle of battle, so he looted useful weapons from the enemies he defeated.

He had discarded one sword on the ground right before he jumped in, and he used the other sword to attack Kirion. After his sword broke, he picked up the other sword without regret over losing the other, and he casted a concealment spell. While conversing with Regina, he had grabbed the sword, but no one realized it. To pull off this trick, he used a technique that binded the item to Azell's skin.

Azell spoke.

“We should settle this situation now...”

However, something even he couldn't have predicted happened.

From all around, flashes of light and torpedo shaped globes started falling in an arc onto the battlefield.

“Shit!”

Ggwa-gwa-gwang! Ggwa-gwa-gwa-gwa-gwang! (TLN: explosion sound)

The lights blew up and it was bright enough to blind a person.

---

One hour had passed since the ruin excavation site and Princess Arietta was ambushed.

The members of the secret society called Dragon’s Shadow was gathered at the ruin excavation site, which was in shambles.

The location was mercilessly demolished. While the monsters were causing havoc, the members of the Dragon’s Shadow planted explosive magic in various locations. The explosion was triggered by attacking it with powerful magic from outside. During all this, the monsters were all getting massacred, but they didn’t care about the sacrifice. Initially, the monsters were subdued to be used as a disposable item.

An appalling amount of dead bodies of humans and monsters were strewn around, but no one cared. The five people were dressed similarly in a suspicious manner, and Regina was the leader who commanded them.

Regina asked in her hoarse voice.

“Where is the Dragon Demon Princess located at?”

“She is 4km North-East from here. Jackal is chasing her, so there is no chance we’ll lose her.”

“We have to capture her before she reaches the fortress. You know this, right?”

The Western Border Fort’s military power was strong. Each of the members of the Dragon’s Shadow had considerable amount of strength, but the Western Border Fort had been fortified against mass attack by monsters, and even an ambush by a dragon. It was impossible to attack them with just their number.

This was why they were moving under the initial assumption that they would catch Arrieta before she reached the Western Border Fort.

“Currently, is anyone with the Dragon Demon Princess?”

“There are four people including the Dragon Demon Princess. Even a non-combatant is among them.”

“Where is the man called Azell Zestringer?”

“He is on the move with the Dragon Demon Princess.”

“I knew he wouldn’t die just from that.” (TLN: the explosion)

After speaking, Regina threw back her hood. The veil of darkness, which was covering her face, disappeared and her bare face was revealed. She had long black hair, and cold blue eyes. She was a woman that gave an impression of sharpness. Her age could be around mid-30s?

Since she was a Dragon Demon, her ears were slightly pointed, and above her left ear there was a black horn that looked like a feather decoration.

“Becareful when you face off against him. Dispose of him from distance if possible.”

“Does he warrant that big of a warning? No matter how I see it he didn’t seem that strong.”

“While he was confronting the Dragon Demon Princess, he was able to assess our exact number.”

“Mmmm?”

Everyone agreed with her.

They were confident that they had hidden their existence. They



used a specialized item to hide their Dragon Magic, so if they hid their life signature, no one should be able to see through to their existence.

In reality, the several hundred soldiers and even the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta was unable to notice them. So how was Azell able to see through to their existence?

Regina spoke.

“Do not think that you have seen the floor when you have only seen his exterior. If you don’t acknowledge the fact that Master level Spirit Order Practitioners are beings who have surpassed humans then you may pay dearly later. ”

“Mmm.”

“You should be very careful, while hunting them. I want you circle them with the forest orcs, and wear them out. I want you to keep scratching and biting them until they are completely tired out. Then we will capture the Dragon Demon Princess and leave. We cannot disappoint that person.....”

After saying this, Regina walked towards the entrance of the ruin.

The entrance to the ruins was being excavated, but the attack from the Dragon’s Shadow had reburied it. For a moment, Regina examined the location before speaking.

“I believe this really is Carlos’ ruin.”

“What? Are you sure?”

The members of the Dragon’s Shadow murmured.

Carlos had left his name in history as an Archmage. He was the hateful enemy of the Dragon’s Shadow. They were a secret organization that worshiped the Dragon Demon Race, who wanted to conquer the human of this world.

Regina nodded her head.

“I think so. However, I’m not an expert, so I’ll have to thoroughly investigate this place. I’ll request for additional troops to be deployed.... It’ll be a race against the time for us. They(TLN: the humans) will comeback after they reorganize themselves.”

“Understood.”

“Then let us start the hunt again.”

The members of the Dragon’s Shadow rushed towards the fleeing Dragon Demon Princess.

---

Azell was used to being chased.

Humans were always numerically inferior in the fight against the Dragon Demon race. The number of Dragon Demon race were small, but they subjugated monsters and demonic animals to fight in their army. When they were unorganized, the monsters and demonic animals couldn't stand up against the might of the human armies. However, they were enslaved by the Dragon Demon race, and they were reborn as a terrifying power.

‘I’m experiencing the same exact situation as before.’

The people, who revealed themselves to be the ‘Dragon’s Shadow’, made Azell think about the Dragon Demon race from 220 years ago.

‘If I’m alone, then I could escape easily....’

Azell was looking around the area while on top of a tree. He threw his gaze downwards, and he saw three members of his party. It was the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta, her young maid Enora, and Rick, who he had rescued during all the confusion.

‘I don’t know what happened to Sir Giles.’

He got separated from Giles. He had no way to know if he was dead or alive.

Azell looked at Arrieta.

‘I’ve take on a really big burden.’

## Chapter 14 - Dragon's Shadow (3)

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Truthfully, Azell had no thoughts about moving around with her. He knew that the target of the enemy was her. When he was escaping the ruin excavation site, Azell prioritized Rick and Giles. After he had woken up, they were the only two people he became attached to. It was unfortunate, but there was a limit to what he could do for the rest of the people.

However, as if it was par for the course, Arrieta stuck to Azell. This was why he had to party with her and her companion, while he was escaping with Rick.

‘My situation always seems to flow towards the difficult side... My fate can't really be this unlucky, right?’

Azell came down from the tree while holding back a sigh.

Rick approached him. He was fine since he heeded Azell's word and hid well.

“Azell.”

“Yeah?”

“What is this?”

Rick put forth the block of wood Azell gave him. Then he

continued to ask questions.

“It was strange. People went past me as if they didn’t see me. Even the enemies did that. At first, I thought it was because of the confusion.... I can feel magical energy from this. What did you do to it?”

“I casted a concealment spell. I don’t have a lot of magical energy, so it wouldn’t have lasted long. Unless you jumped around and yelled, the others wouldn’t have noticed you.”

This was the reason why Azell insisted on handing over the wooden block to Rick. Also, if he gave an object imbued with his magical energy, it was indicator that’ll point out Rick when he wanted to find him during the confusion.

Rick was surprised so he queried.

“Spirit Order can do such a thing?”

“Yes, it can”

“It’s the first time I heard of this. Who are you really.....”

Normally, spirit order was considered an extension of a martial art that deals with super human technique. People only knew about the super human physical ability and the extrasensory perception of the Spirit Order practitioner. However, they didn’t get the core principles.

It was actually a secret technique stolen from the Dragon Demon race, and it was another form of magic. Depending on one's will, it affects the mind and it has more influence over one's mind than magic.

In the past, Azell had learned the Spirit Order's writing of divination to contend against the Dragon Demon race. He used it in full force to fight against them.

Currently, he had lost his power, but the techniques he learned hadn't deserted him.

The confused Rick spoke.

"No, it's not the time to quibble over this. Thank you."

If it wasn't Azell, then he would have died in the confusion. Rick honestly expressed his thanks.

Azell smiled. However, he suddenly called out to Arrieta.

"Princess."

"What's going on?"

While asking his question, Azell wasn't intimidated at all by the status of the princess. If she had a stiff personality then she would

have bristled at the human of low standing who had ‘dared’ to talked to her without her permission. However, Arrieta accepted his behavior without any animosity.

Azell spoke.

“I’m sure that the organization called the Dragon’s Shadow is targeting you, Princess.”

“I agree with you on that point. From the beginning, the attacked was aimed at me.”

“By my estimation, their goal was to capture you alive. By any chance, do you have any idea why they want you, princess?”

“I have no idea. I’ve never even heard of an organization called the Dragon’s Shadow.”

“Is there any possibility of a grudge?”

“I have no idea. Since I’ve come-of-age, I’ve only received orders from the throne to fight for the people. I’ve fought against humans on the battle field and killed some of them. Still it isn’t something that would have led to a grudge held by such suspicious people.”

“So that’s how it is.”

Arrieta asked Azell, who was frowning.



“Do you mind if I ask you one question?”

“Yes.”

“By listening to your words, they aren’t the evil magicians that had a antagonistic relationship with you.” (TLN: if you forgot, he made up a lie saying he was kidnapped by an evil magician)

“I think so?”

“Why is it a question?”

“I don’t have much memories about them. You might have heard about my situation from someone else, but....”

“I’ve heard that you have lost many parts of your memories, and you almost have no memories from the past couple years...”

“That is true.”

“I have a hard time believing that story. However, it isn’t a question I should quibble about right now.”

Arrieta shook her head, and brushed the question aside. She continued to speak. No, she was going to speak, but Azell suddenly frowned. He turned his gaze toward one side of the forest. He spoke while standing up.

“I’m sorry, but we’ll have to push the story to another time. We have to move.”

“What do you mean?”

“The enemies are approaching.”

“How do you know this?”

Arrieta queried. She was a Dragon Demon, so her senses were evolved. It couldn’t even be compared to a normal person. However, she couldn’t feel the presence of the numerous enemies approaching them.

Azell spoke.

“I just know it. I believe they are masking their sounds with magic.”

He decided to go with that explanation. It was tiresome for Azell to explain it and he didn’t have the time. Arrieta didn’t press for an answer.

“I understand.”

“Then let’s move.”

Azell started walking in the front of the group, while he was grumbling inside.

‘I’ve been drawn into a troublesome matter. Since we’ve come this far, I can’t abandon them now....’

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The bottom line was that it was impossible for Azell’s party to evade the enemy and run away.

The enemies tracked them as if they knew which road they took and how they were moving around. Moreover, they were much faster than his party.

Azell couldn’t help but click his tongue after he sensed the enemies closing in.

‘It’s impossible for us to shake them off.’

Azell and Arrieta could escape this place in a moments notice. However, their party consisted of Rick and Enora. When the enemies reached 100 meters from their location, Arrieta could sense their existence.

“They really are coming after us. As you said, they are hiding their sound. I’m sure there is a magician... He is a very talented bastard, who is good at hiding himself.”

“If it is him, I think I’m starting to understand what is going on.”

“Mmm?”

“From a different direction than the approaching enemy, there is someone else observing us. I can feel his Sight on the back of my head. Please take this point into consideration. Be careful not to let him read your lips.”

“Why is that?”

“It is better not to give them any information including what we are talking about.”

“Hmmm....”

Arrieta made a surprised expression. The enemy could observe them with magic and her conversation could be made out by observing the movement of her mouth. She had never thought about this.

Once again she became curious about the man’s identity in front of her. What background does this man possess as to allow him to act like this in this situation?

Azell spoke.

“There may be others, but they haven’t entered into a distance where I could detect them. Maybe they don’t have their Sight on us or.....”

In Azell’s time, he was able to detect the enemy’s existence by the ‘Sight’ that was aimed toward him from long distance. It was an essential technique he had to learn. The Dragon Demon race was able to observe the humans at a distance much farther than an arrow can reach. They earned information this way and they even used magic to snipe people.

If it was the old him then he would have been able to capture the presence of his opponent easily. Since his magical energy was very low, he couldn’t use the technique to materialize the identity of the disharmony he felt with his senses.

‘Really. I’m so frustrated.’

He was used to fighting in a disadvantageous situation. At that moment, he wasn’t agitated, and he coolly assessed his capabilities to find a way out.

However, he did miss his former self’s strength. It was inevitable when he was facing a dangerous life threatening situation.

Azell laughed bitterly.

“Rick.”

“Yeah?”

“If we move at our current pace, then how long will it take for us to arrive at the fortress?”

“I, I don’t know?”

Rick was taken aback.

Azell was leading them from the front, but he didn’t know the location of the Western Border Fort. The only person who might know the exact location of the place was Rick.

Rick spoke in a scarcely audible voice.

“I don’t really know either.....”

“You worked here for 2 years yet you don’t know that?”

“I’m a healer, so this is the first time I’ve left the encampment.”

“I don’t think that is something you should be boasting about?”

“Ughh....”

After Azell shot him down, Rick’s morale fell. However, he realized an important fact.

“Wait a second. So you were wandering around the forest without knowing the location of the fort?”

“It was important for us to immediately escape where we were. I didn’t have time to quibble about such things until now.”

“I guess that makes sense..”

“Rick, it would have be nice if you knew the layout of this place... We are in a bind. Should we just head towards west?”

At that moment, Arrieta spoke.

“If it is the Western Border Fort, I know where it is.”

“You do?”

“I memorized it when I visited the fort. I am somewhat proficient in far-seeing techniques, so I think I can guide us without losing direction.”

“Then please guide us. I’ve never been there.”

“I understand. However, there is one problem.”

“What is it?”

“It is towards the direction where the enemy is approaching from.”

Unfortunately, the enemy was approaching from the direction of the fort. Therefore, the party had to give up on taking the shortest route and take a big detour.

Still, they eventually had to fight against the enemy when they failed to shake them off.

“Kyaaaaaaa!”

Suddenly, the screaming enemies jumped out from between the trees. They(TLN:Azell’s party) were very shocked. The enemy had hid their sound, so they were just a stone’s throw away.

“It’s a forest orc.”

Of course, Azell and Arrieta were utterly unflappable.

The orcs were the most typical humanoid monsters. Their shape were similar to humans, but their skin color was markedly different. Their face was shaped like a demon, and their canines protruded out from their mouth. Their average height was higher than the humans, and on average, they were also more muscular. They were a step above humans in combat ability.



The forest orcs had dark green skin, and their bodies were smaller than the orcs from the wilderness or the plains. They were physically weaker than the other orcs, but instead they moved more nimbly inside a forest.

“This is rather better!” (TLN: he’s saying he’d rather fight than run)

After saying this, Azell attacked the first bastard who jumped forth. He lightly avoided the descending sword, and he cut its head off.

“Back off!”

At that moment, Arrieta shouted. The shout was infused with magical energy, and the surrounding space started to reverberate.

The forest orcs, who were running towards them, flinched. The shout was like a lion’s roared. It had the power of suppression, because it held the power of dissonance.

The moment she shouted Azell had naturally stolen the forest orcs’ swords, and he retreated to the back.

Afterwards, Arrieta swung her sword.

“Oh wicked darkness, split!”

Pah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

A blinding light was emitted from the tip of the sword. It was the technique she had used previously to slice through the monsters, who had invaded ruin excavation site.

It was hard to believe that she would be able to defeat forest orcs in its entirety, but...

Kwa-Chang!

A destructive sound that hurt the ear rang out, and the light dispersed. At the same time, the forest orc's bodies were surrounded by a light that looked like blue flames.

Arrieta was taken aback.

“Is it a defensive magic?”

Someone had casted a strong defensive magic on couple dozen forest orcs, which was able to block her attack. There must be a magician who possessed powerful magic. She was sure of it. Also...

Pa-ji-ji-ji-ji-jeek! (TLN: electricity sound)

There was a terrifying sound of discharge ringing in the air, and a large lightning fell from the sky.

Ggwa-ru-roong! Ggwa-gwang!(TLN:sound of thunder)

Their vision burned white. The lightning exploded and the space churned vigorously before settling down.

Then a deep low voice rang out.

“Hmmm. As expected of the Dragon Demon Princess.”

The person, who spoke on top of the tree, was a member of the Dragon’s Shadow. He wore a black robe around his body like the other members, and the veil of darkness hid his face.

However, it wasn’t Regina or Kirion, but another member of the Dragon’s Shadow. One could tell he was human by looking at the smooth back of his hands. (TLN: no gems embedded)

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....! (TLN: rumbling sound)

Inside the settling dust, a sphere made out of faint light came into view. Arrieta had put up a shield to protect her party.

Arrieta asked.

“Are you the Dragon Shadow’s magician?”

“Yes, I am. Dragon Demon Princess.”

“I see you are a human.”

“Our organization isn’t only made up of Dragon Demons. Also...”

Hweeeeeeeee....(TLN: wind noise)

He was encircled by wind, and he started to rise into the air.

“Not all human magicians are weaker than Dragon Demons.”

“Mmmmm....”

It was as he said.

Dragon Demons were born with unfathomable amount of magical energy and stronger bodies compared to humans. However, a pure human could surpass them through spirit order or magic.

Kyahhhhh!

At that moment, the orcs from across the forest started charging towards them. At the same time, the sounds of an earthquake was heard from the other side of the forest.

Koong-koong-koong-koong-koong!

The large humanoid ogres were approaching. Moreover, they could sense a large number of demonic beasts heading towards them from a different direction.

Arrieta moaned.

“They moved their troops while we were focused on this bastard!”

“Yes. We didn’t think we could sap away your strength with just this.”

The magician shrugged his shoulder. At the same time, Azell moved.

Shweeek!

From the side, something flew towards him, and it grazed by Azell’s head. It was transparent so it couldn’t be seen. It was a energy arrow made from magic.

The magician was surprised after seeing this.

“Ho-oh, you dodged that. Like Regina said, I’ll have to be careful with you.”

“I’m tired of being sniped.”

Azell shrugged his shoulder.

The previous attack flew in from 100 meters away. The member of Dragon Demon, who brought the ogres, tried to snipe Azell in the confusion.

It was an invisible magical arrow that was sent when everyone's attention was distracted. If it wasn't Azell, one would have died without being able to do anything.

‘Did he think something that slow could hit me?’

Azell snorted. The magical arrow was invisible, but the speed of the arrow was slower than a real arrow. Of course, Azell's standard was high enough to consider the speed to be inconsequential.

‘So there are only two bastards from the Dragon's Shadow here?’

Besides the magician that showed himself in front of Azell, he realized there was another person who had tried to snipe him. He was the one bring the demonic beasts from the opposite direction.

During all this, Arrieta clashed against the charging forest orcs.

## Chapter 15 - Dragon's Shadow (4)

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“You dirty bastards!”

She continued to swing her sword, while shouting in an angry voice. The forest orcs returned her attack with their thick blades. Her stature was much smaller than them, and they trusted their defensive magic.

However, the result was devastating.

Qwa-hak! (TLN: blade breaking)

The forest orcs' blades all broke from one strike. Even their body was torn to pieces as if a large tooth had bit into them.

The blood and flesh scattered as if they had exploded.

Arrieta's movement was faster than the blood flying into the air. After defeating the initial enemies, she casted her instantaneous movement method. In a moment, she appeared between the forest orcs.

The orcs couldn't grasp her movement at all. Before they could turn their heads, Arrieta's sword ran by them. Then in a moment, she disappeared using her instantaneous movement method, and she moved to a different location.

Pah-ah-ah-ahng! (TLN: sound of sword hitting barrier)

Arrieta's sword was obstructed when she had targeted the big forest orc with the largest head. The forest orc resisted Arrieta's sword when he expelled a power from its mouth, which looked like pale yellow flames.

Hoo-doo-doo-doo-dook! (TLN: sound of flesh/blood hitting ground)

As Arrieta's silver hair fluttered down, the blood and flesh of the forest orcs she had initially killed fell to the ground.

Shortly afterwards, seven forest orcs fell to the ground, while spouting blood.

This all had happened before the fountaining blood could fall. It happened in an instant. It was as if she was running on a different time scale.

This being was more sturdy than others, and it could also use its magical energy to produce a special power.

It was able to block Arrieta's attack

“Ku-roo-roo-roo-roo.....!”

The forest orcs, who had blocked Arrieta's sword, was the leader.



Orcs were also beings of magic. Amongst them, there were individual beings, who could use magical forces unique to their race. (TLN: race specific magic)

This was how it was able to block Arrieta's attack. It had concentrated its magical energy, and it put a force field of light on its sword. However, this was its limit.

Arrieta's golden eyes stared at it, while speaking.

"You are the first orc, who was able to receive a single blow from me."

Their height differed by 80 cms. Its body was also twice her size.

"However, it seems you are at your limit."

The forest orc, who had crossed swords with Arrieta, couldn't handle the strength pressing down on him, and its body was trembling. Just from the single blow, its internal organs were erratic, and his knees were halfway bent.

"Kuh-wuh-uh-uh-uh!"

At that moment, a large shadow showed itself between the overgrown trees. It was a giant monster, whose height was 5 meters tall. It was an ogre. It had rough and thick gray colored skin, which reminded one of boulders. It was bald, and the pupils were red as if it was burning. It was a scary face akin to a demon.

An existence with such appearance approached them. Its body was as big as an house, and its existence was fear itself.

The ogre swung its arm, which was as thick as a tree trunk.

Kwa-ja-jak! (TLN: tree snapping sound)

The large tree broke and fell after it was hit by the arm. However, the target aimed by the ogre was already gone.

“Hmmm.”

The target was Azell. Azell used the Instantaneous Movement technique to climb up the ogre’s shoulder.

“Ku-ooh?”

The ogre was taken aback. In a moment, it had no idea where Azell went.

Ogres had enormous strength, so much so that it was called a walking disaster. It could split a human open with just its fingers, and it was fast enough for a human to have difficulty escaping it. Moreover, their hides were too hard. One couldn’t even make a scratch with a knife.

However, the ogres had a weakness.

“Kah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!”

The ogre screamed in pain. Azell had stabbed his sword into its ear hole. Azell let go of his sword, and as he left, he kicked the hilt of the sword. This caused the sword to bury deep inside the head and to top it off, the magical energy inside the sword exploded within.

“Ku-uh-uh-uh-uh....!”

The ogre’s eyes rolled up. Even if it was an ogre, it couldn’t resist against an attack that dug through its head. Once the life left the ogre, its body started tilting over, and the forest orcs scattered in fright.

The ogre’s corpse fell like a large house collapsing, and a massive sound rang out.

Ku-ooh-oong!

---

“.....”

Everyone was unable to speak. The ogre, who appeared in such a fearsome fashion, died just like that....

“I’m glad I was able to kill the bastard that will give me some trouble.”

Azell landed on the ground, and he picked up a sword of a dead forest orc. Arrieta felt that he was very different from others when she watched his figure.

‘This is the first time I’ve seen someone fight like that.’

It wasn’t just his method of getting rid of the ogre. She had never seen a person like Azell, who strictly treated weapons as a disposable item. Even if he used the weapons stolen from the enemies, how could he throw away the weapons without any hesitation?

Ku-ru-roong! Ka-roong! (TLN: wolf noises)

The silence didn’t last too long. From the other side, a blood wolf with blood red eyes appeared. It was as large as an ox, and its body was covered with dark red fur.

Inside its jaw, a cursed black flame was rising forth.

Azell clicked his tongue.

“Jeez, they are pulling out all the stops.”

He didn’t say this because he saw the blood wolf.

Numerous black tentacles started coming out from the ground

and it closed around Azell's body. It was a magical tentacle made out of darkness.

However, right before Azell was caught he used his Instantaneous Movement technique to escape.

Pah-ji-ji-jeek! (TLN: electricity noise)

In the next moment, a blue spark appeared behind the mage, who was floating in the air. However, the mage calmly looked behind his back.

“You are pretty fast, but you lack strength.”

High ranking mages could accelerate their senses so much that it couldn't even be compared to a normal person. They also used various methods to protect their body. Azell's instantaneous movement was at a speed where the mage could capture it with his senses.

Azell's sword was stopped by a barrier he couldn't see. Azell's sword was infused with magical energy, but it had no chance of piercing through the shield.

Azell grumbled.

“You are poking at a sore spot. I most definitely lack power.”

“You’ll have to die here.”

The mage turned around, and he unleashed his magic. No, he tried to do that.

Pah-hak!

Azell’s sword, which was being stopped by the barrier, cut through his body as if it was a lie.

“Uhh....?”

The mage groaned in disbelief. The veil of darkness was covering his face, but it was probably dyed with shocked.

Puk.

Azell kicked the mage, who was still floating in the air. He rode on top of the falling mage.

“I’ll return your words right back.”

Then Azell stabbed the mage’s heart, and he jumped into the air by kicking the body.

Boom!

The mage's body fell while his blood fountained forth.

“He was full of holes.” (TLN: talking about the mage's defense)

Azell mumbled, while he looked at the dead mage.

Just a moment ago, while Azell had clashed against the barrier, the mage acted stupidly by loafing around. (TLN: tried to give an evil monologue. rookie mistake ^\_^)

In Azell's time, one deserved death if the opponent acted like that towards a master level Spirit Order practitioner. The opponent revealed his weak point.

‘I was able to kill him easily. It couldn't be that they don't know about magical frequency...’

The magical energy injected into the sword was resonating on the same frequency as the magical pattern of the barrier put up by the mage. By doing this, the resistance of the barrier was neutralized.

Even Azell couldn't decipher the enemy's magical pattern in a moment. It was impossible. However, he was able to do it because he was able to calmly observe the pattern, while he was making contact with it. The mage from the Dragon's Shadow didn't think such an act was possible. The mage was taken down when he relaxed for a couple seconds.

The mages from Azell's time continuously changed their magic

pattern during a close combat with the enemy. It was an essential rule that one can't relax during a contact state. Maybe this generation of mages don't have such common sense?

The dead mage's skill was pretty good.

'I guess he really thought I wasn't worth his notice and looked down on me.'

Usually the Spirit Order practitioner's skill is proportional to the amount of magical energy one carries. After a certain level it was nonsense to use such logic, but Azell could see how the enemy could be careless after seeing his trifle amount of magical energy.

Azell clicked his tongue after seeing his sword dyed in blood.

"I can't use this any more."

When it clashed against the mage's barrier, it formed a crack, and now it looked like it'll break soon. He shouldn't expect quality from swords used by orcs.

Azell threw away the sword without any regret. He kicked a nearby sword with the top of his foot, and he snatched the sword out of the air. Thanks to Arrieta killing numerous orcs, he had plenty of weapons to use.

Immediately, he took a small step to the side.



Ggwa-gwang! (TLN: boom)

An invisible magical fire cut through the space where his head used to be. From his back, the sound of an explosion rang out, and the dirt fountained into the air. If he was hit by it then it had enough power to end him.

However, Azell was totally unperturbed, and he spoke.

“If you want revenge for your companion, then why don’t you stop hiding and come out? That kind of amateurish ambush won’t work against me, Dragon Demon.”

“Kuk....”

Around 100 meters off from the battlefield, one could hear a groan leak out.

The member of the Dragon’s Shadow, who was hiding himself with magic, appeared. He had on a similar outfit as his compatriots, but the back of his hands had a gunmetal colored Dragon Demon Stone. He was a Dragon Demon.

Arrieta became guarded when she saw him.

‘What method are they using?’

What kind of method was able to thoroughly trick her senses?  
Also...

‘What method is that guy using to detect the enemy?’

She hadn’t detected the enemy, but Azell was able to see through it easily.

At that moment, the enemy Dragon Demon raged.

“A mere human dared to killed a member of our organization!”

“Wow. That’s pretty fresh? Is it a fad for a Dragon Demon to speak like the Dragon Demon Race?”

“Shut up!”

The Dragon Demon unsheathed his sword. Unlike the other members of the Dragon’s Shadow, this one used a weapon.

“You deserve to die for possessing the name Azell. Remember this. My name is Jackal.” (TLN: it is actually written as Ji-kel or another interpretation could be Sickel, I’ll just go with Jackal since I like that better)

“I really don’t know what the hell you are talking about. Could you at least explain it to me?”

“You don’t have to know. It is a waste of time for me to talk to a sinner, who is destined to die.”

Hwa-ah-ah-ah-ahk. (TLN: flame igniting sound)

From Jackal’s back, flames rose into the sky. In a flash, the strong flames started spreading towards the forest.

Azell was suprised when he saw this.

“You started a fire in the forest? Have you lost your mind?”

When the forest was one’s battlefield, it was logical for one to not attack with fire. Yet this person in front of him started a fire?

Jackal snorted.

“Why should I care if the forest burns down? Now you won’t be able to go to the fort, Dragon Demon Princess.”

“You started a fire just to prevent me from going to the Western Border fort?”

Arrieta was taken aback.

Jackal replied.

“Yes.”

The fire was spreading everywhere, so even if it was Arrieta, it would be hard for her to get to the Western Border fort. She would have to circle around and avoid the places where the fire was spreading. The Dragon's Shadow was planning on targeting her during all of this.

Arrieta asked a question.

“Why are you targeting me?”

“You'll find out once you go with us.”

“You bastards are making me irritated!”

Arrieta cried out in anger, but she couldn't approach Jackal. The ogres, demonic beasts and forest orcs were charging at her. She was fighting, while protecting her companions, so she couldn't step forward rashly.

Jackal made a proclamation.

“Eventually the Dragon Demon Princess will be in our hands.”

Afterwards he didn't stand against Azell and Arrieta. He jumped across the large fire and he hid himself.

# Chapter 16 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (1)

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If one asked anyone from Rulain Kingdom's Western Border Patrol as to what was the most frightening existence inside the Balan forest was, they wouldn't hesitate to give their answer.

Dragons.

These tyrants existed deep inside the spacious Balan forest, and none of the demonic beasts could approach them. They were on the apex of the food chain. Enormous amounts of damages occurred every time they moved. The Western Border Patrol was cautious as to never enter their territory.

Koo-roo-roo-roo-roo.....

It was rare for the dragons to come out of their territories. They filled their bellies by catching preys within the boundaries of their territories like full stomached demonic beasts.

However, they were always beholden to a thirst. Normal beasts couldn't understand this agony.

They were aware that they were unintelligent, so they thirsted for knowledge.

“This is a trade.”

The short stature of Regina was standing in front of a dragon. She was breaking out into cold sweat within her hood.

Two large eyes were watching her within the darkness of the forest, and it was emitting a tremendous amount of intimidation. Even if she was a Dragon Demon, she couldn't help but feel fear when she was in close proximity to a dragon.

On the surface, it looked like a large violent animal. Will this existence be able to understand her?

In her head, she knew it could understand her language. However, she felt more and more unsure as she stared at it. What would happen if it didn't understand her words and it treated her as a prey, who had invaded its territory?

Regina desperately tried to suppress her worries and fear.

“If you fulfill our request, you will be able earn the ‘Moment of Wisdom’.”

Koo-roo-roo-roo-roo..... (TLN: Dragon growls)

“Will you accept it?”

Koong! Koo-oong! (TLN: sound of dragon moving)

The dragons walked forth from the darkness when it was asked

this question. Regina stopped breathing when the enormous body appeared between the trees.

Earth Dragon. (TLN: ji-ryong)

This was the name given to dragons that could move freely underground like swimming fish. The silhouette looked like an elongated lizard, and it had dark brown scales that had a rock-like texture. It had a curved horn, and its red eyes were slit vertically. From head to tail, it measured over 30 meters, and it was a monster with a castle-like bulk.

The dragon nodded its head, while looking at Regina.

‘It really... It understands human speech.’

It couldn’t form words by itself, but it could understand everything. Even if it was any other language in this world, it would have understood it. Regina didn’t know how this was possible. Still, the earth dragon could understand Regina’s words, and it had accepted her request. This was all that mattered.

Regina spoke naturally, while she was suppressing a sigh of relief.

“Then I’ll describe your target.”

---

At night, the forest was swept up in deep darkness. The only source of light one can rely on was the moon light and starlight.

However, 4 people were moving through this darkness.

It was Azell, Rick, Arrieta and Enora.

“Enora.”

Suddenly Arrieta opened her mouth. She was looking at Enora, who was stumbling from fatigue.

“Yes?”

“I’ll carry you.”

“...I, I cannot commit such disrespect ”

Enora was startled as if she was burnt by a fire.

Arrieta had a loose personality, so much so that it was hard to believe that she was royalty. However, it was fact that she was someone who was as high as the sky. So how could she allow this precious person to carry her?

“I know you are having a hard time walking. Currently, it’s the right move.”



“But...”

“It’s an order. Get on.”

After Arrieta started showing her back in front of her, Enora hesitated before she got on. Azell was impressed when he saw this.

‘This princess’ personality is quite awesome.’

At first, he was annoyed that she had followed him, but as he observed her actions he liked her. It wasn’t easy for a member of a royal family to act this way. Is it because she was born with a unique identity called the Dragon Demon Princess?

Azell turned around and looked at Rick.

“Rick. Want me to give you a piggy-back?”

“...I’ll refuse.”

Rick was also tired.

After the Dragon Demon Jackal started the forest fire, the party was continuously ambushed by monsters and demonic beasts for half a day. The fire was spreading aggressively, and they were desperately running away to avoid the fire. They were barely able to escape from the direction the fire was spreading when they were

again attacked by the monsters and demonic beasts.

Arrieta was also getting tired from continuously battling them. It was a miracle that Enora and Rick hadn't received a major injury during all this.

‘My condition isn't that great either.’

While coming to this place, he had rotated with Arrieta to recharge their magical energy with meditation. However, he could do nothing about the accumulated fatigue.

Azell spoke.

“Currently, I don't feel anyone's Sight on us. This must be the effect of the fire I started a while ago. ”

“I could have never imagined you would do such a radical act.”

“The other side started the fire first. If we want to escape, we have to take on some risks.”

Azell took drastic measure to escape from the enemy's pursuit. He also set the forest on fire like Jackal. Of course unlike Jackal, he devised a means to do it in a controlled manner.

While they were moving, he had conversations with Arrieta to get all the relevant information, and he had started a fire in certain

areas. He also put in a spell that'll automatically extinguish the fire after a certain amount of time had passed. However, this was the forest not the plains. There wasn't any guarantee that it'll turn out like they wanted. Like the fire that was still burning at the other side of forest, there was a huge risk that the fire would continue to spread.

“Fortunately, it seems to have ended without spreading...”

Arrieta showed signs of disapproval. His actions had too much risk. She had followed Azell's words, because she didn't have any other choice.

‘However, if we didn't do that then we wouldn't have been able to avoid the enemy's surveillance.’

The members of the Dragon's Shadow took action after using a far-seeing magic to locate their party. If they weren't able to avoid the Sight, then the party would have had no reasons to feel relief.

Azell spoke.

“We should rest right about now. Are you able to generate heat without making a fire, Princess?”

“I can. However, why don't you also work once in awhile?”

“It's unfortunate, but I have very little magical energy.”

“You have so much skill yet your magical energy is weak. You are a really strange man.”

“I really don’t want to be this kind of a man.”

After Azell answered back cheekily , Arrieta casted a magic on the ground while snorting. Heat started coming out from the location where the magic was casted, and it drove the cold air away.

Azell spoke.

“Let us rest in shifts. I don’t think we can rest for long.”

“We can’t expect the enemies to not move during the night.”

“Yes. Even if we set aside the bastards from the Dragon’s Shadow, there are the monsters and demonic animals they use as troops.”

There were a lot of nocturnal monsters and demonic animals.

Azell spoke.

“Princess and I will rotate sentry duties.”

“Huh? Why? Shouldn’t everyone rotate? Ah, even if we exclude

Miss Enora....”

Rick raised the question. Even if they excluded the young girl Enora, shouldn't a healthy adult male like him take a turn on sentry duty?

Azell explained his reasoning.

“Unfortunately, you aren't much help as a sentry. Once you are able to detect the enemy's movements, it'll be too late.”

“Ughh. So that's how it is.”

“So rest well. You will have to recover your stamina, at least a little bit, to be able to follow us.”

They hadn't had anything to eat, while they were coming here. They were able to occasionally drink some water they found. This meant their stamina was extremely low.

Rick bit his lips.

“I'm sorry.”

“Before you rest why don't you look after Miss Enora. I believe she sustained some minor injuries.”

“Ok.”

Rick followed his words. Enora had traveled the forest road in haste, so her clothes were ripped in places and she had sustained some injuries. Rick performed his healing art, and the wounds healed.

Azell spoke to Arrieta.

“Let us set the night watch for 1 hour. Do you want the first watch, Princess?”

Usually the earlier watch is easier. He had made this suggestion as a kind gesture, but she shook her head.

“No. I want to sleep first, even if it is a little bit. You go first, please.”

“Understood.”

Suddenly, Arrieta’s face was drowned in anxiety.

“I don’t know what happened to the others.”

“They’ll be safe.”

Azell wanted to reassure her, eventhough he didn’t have any

basis for it. Arrieta sighed.

“After rescuing Enora, I decided that it would be safer for them if I moved independently. So I followed you... I don't know if I made the right choice....”

‘Is that why she followed me?’ (TLN: she knew the bad guys would kill her party if she stayed with them)

Azell wondered as to why she followed him instead of the party she came with from the throne. However, she did have a reason.

It was both funny and shocking at the same time.

“So you thought it was ok for me to fall into danger?”

“That wasn't the reason why I followed you.”

“Then why?”

“I was suspicious. At first, I thought maybe you were an agent of the organization called Dragon's Shadow.”

“Even after I had saved you, Princess?”

“You fought against them and injured them, but you hadn't killed them. Therefore, there was a chance that it was an act to

trick me.”

Even though these were words casted suspicion on him, Azell was a bit impressed.

‘Ho-oh. She’s pretty good?’

It was a sharp observation. For beings with superhuman capabilities, they would do unimaginable things to disguise themselves. It was beyond normal human’s imagination.

Arrieta spoke.

“However, I have confirmed it while we were cooperating with each other. At the very least, you aren’t an enemy.”

“I want to thank you for believing in me.”

“There are still a mountain of things that is suspicious.... At the very least, I am willing to believe that you don’t hold any evil intentions towards me. Now I’ll sleep for a little bit.”

After saying this, Arrieta leaned against a tree and she closed her eyes. Before 3 seconds had passed, she started breathing steadily.

Azell started mumbling because he was amazed.



“How can she sleep in such a situation....”

Azell was a man with a certain view about sleep. His view on sleep might be strange to hear, but he considered the ability to sleep as the most important ability to have in the battle field. It was important for survival to sleep when opportunity presents itself, and use it to recover one's stamina.

Among the Spirit Order techniques, there were techniques used to induce sleep. Azell enjoyed using such techniques.

However, Arrieta wasn't using any such techniques. She just decided she wanted to sleep then she slept.

“Jeez.”

Azell burst out laughing.

Unlike her previous figure that was overflowing with dignity, her appearance right now was vastly different. Her face was that of a innocent girl. She was covered in dirt, but she slept soundly as if she was sleeping on her own bed. It almost blurred his sense of reality.

## Chapter 17 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (2)

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“The P, Princess has always been able to sleep well in any place.”

Enora spoke nervously.

Enora was just a normal girl, so today's events had taxed her physically and mentally. She felt like she could fall over any second from fatigue. However, she couldn't sleep because she was afraid and nervous.

Azell laughed bitterly, while looking at Enora.

“Being able to sleep anywhere is a merit. Especially on the battlefield....”

“.....”

“Little lady should also sleep a little.”

While speaking kindly, Azell touched Enora's forehead with his fingers. This caused Enora to suddenly feel sleepy.

‘Ah, how come....?’

Such a question occurred to her, but it didn't last long. She fell asleep just like that.

Rick queried.

“What did you do?

“I made her sleep.”

“You can do that?”

“It’s easy. Should I do it to you?”

“Is there any side effects?”

“None.”

“Please do so. I don’t think I’ll be able to fall asleep.....”

After saying those words, Rick fell asleep once Azell’s hand touched him.

Azell looked at the night sky through the trees as he mused.

‘The stars are still the same.’

This was the only thing that was intact from his memories.

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Curiously, Azell hadn't dreamed once since he woke up. It was as if he had dreamed a life time worth of dreams during his long sleep....

Of course, he couldn't have. This was proven when Azell slept after he had rotated with Arrieta.

'Azell'

Azell heard someone calling his name inside his dream.

'Azell'

It was the sound of an unfamiliar man's voice. However, there was some nostalgic sound mixed in there.

'Who are you?'

While thinking this, Azell looked towards the owner of the voice.

Is it because it was a dream? The process of finding him wasn't needed. The moment Azell thought he wanted to see the person, the person appeared in front of him.

'Is this a dream?'

‘Yes. It is your dream.’

‘Who are you?’

‘Those are the most disappointing words in the world.’

The other person smiled wryly.

However, he couldn’t see the other’s face. It was as if his gaze wouldn’t reach above the other’s mouth....

‘You have to know who I am. Only then can you see me.’

Azell was momentarily lost in his thoughts, when he was given this unreasonable requirement. Then he suddenly thought of this one person, and he was shocked.

‘...Carlos?’

He was recorded in history as an arch mage, and he was Azell’s best friend.

Then his face was revealed. In front of his eyes, there was an old man with crooked features.

‘You....’

For a moment, Azell looked him over with surprised eyes. Carlos laughed playfully. Azell spoke while looking at him.

‘...you lost all your hair?’

‘Is that the only thing you can comment on!’

Carlos flew into a rage.

Yes. The man who was called an archmange, Carlos, was bald. All of the hair on his head was gone, but he had a robust beard. Azell smirked, while watching him fume.

‘What can I do when that’s the most visible thing. Anyways, you have aged.’

‘I’m different from you. I’m guessing you haven’t aged at all?’

‘Thanks to you. Can’t you tell by looking at me?’

‘I can’t see you.’

‘What?’

‘You are seeing a remnant I left in your energy pulse(TLN: think of it as his dantian). I’m just talking and moving like the Carlos you knew. However, I am not him. Also, I don’t share the same time as

you. I can only have a conversation with you.'

'The Carlos I knew wasn't a bald headed old man...'

'Is that the only thing you have to say!'

Carlos flew into a rage again. Azell burst out in laughter.

'Poot.(TLN:sound of suppressed laughter) You must have become very temperamental when you aged? Carlos had a cold intellect. He was famous for being a cold and patient magician, who always made the right judgements. I don't know how he became a bad tempered bald old man.... Tsk tsk. He must have swapped his precious thing for an archmage's reputation. '

'When you said precious thing, what are you trying to say to me? Huh? Surely, you aren't talking about my hair? You aren't, right?'

'You are well aware of it yourself?'

Azell had a fun time teasing him.

The Carlos, in front of his eyes, was not the real. It was only the remnant of his thoughts he left behind. He must have made it to deliver a message to his friend who would wake up in an unknown period in the far distant future....

Still, it was quite enjoyable to make conversation with him. Even

if he was a mere illusion, his memory of the time he spent with Carlos was revived.

Azell spoke.

‘By looking at your appearance, you must have made this remnant long after I fell asleep.’

‘Yes. I was 78 year old.’

The voice was different from Azell’s memories, because he had aged. However, there was a similar sound akin to the voice Azell remembered.

Even his appearance was like that. He had lost his hair, grown a thick beard, and the wrinkles were everywhere.... Still his eyes was very similar to the Carlos he knew.

Azell asked.

‘When did you start losing your hair?’

‘Stop talking about that.’

‘Jeez. Just tell me. If you don’t, then I’ll find out about it by looking through the history books.’



‘Do what you want. I’ll exercise my right to remain silent on the subject. Young kids have no manners.’

‘Jeez. I might look young, but I’m way older than you. I’ve woken up after sleeping for 220 years.’

‘The human age isn’t about how long you have existed. It is about how long you have lived.’

‘However, shouldn’t we include sleep as living?’

‘I guess so.’

‘Then acknowledge my age.’

‘If a person mimics an animal’s hibernation and sleeps then it isn’t included.’

‘You are forcing it.’

Azell laughed. Then he spoke.

‘Maybe you can’t react to facts you don’t know or wasn’t able to correctly predict?’

‘Yes.’

For example, Azell told the remnant of Carlos' remnant that 220 years had passed yet he didn't show any surprise. Maybe, it was an information that couldn't be entirely processed by the old remnant, so it couldn't be respond to it.

Azell asked.

‘How long do you have?’

‘Not long. Most of the time had been wasted having a conversation with you.’

‘So we can't have a long conversation.’

‘Maybe if I was a ghost, but I'm a remnant left inside someone else's energy pulse.’

This meant that once Azell started circulating the magical energy through his magical pulse his own sense of self would become stronger, and the remnant would continue to fade.

It probably was disappearing even at this moment.

Azell queried.

‘Then I'll ask you something important. You exist to give me what message?’

Carlos wouldn't have made a remnant of his spirit to just stroke at his memories. There must be something he wanted to pass on to Azell.

Carlos spoke.

'I don't know when you woke up. Also, I have no idea what the situation at that time period will hold.'

He just felt relieved that it didn't happen during his life time. The remnant of Carlos' spirit said so.

'I can only talk about the news based on when I lived. Azell, Atein is alive.'

'What?'

Azell was taken aback.

The Dragon Demon King Atein was alive? This can't be. Azell had killed him directly. Azell had killed him after setting up a situation where he couldn't have survived the final battle!

Carlos spoke.

'To be precise, he didn't die all the way. Before you killed him, he prepared a method that'll allow him to revive himself. Moreover, this method is being secretly carried out by his followers, who

follow his will. This has been going on for a couple decades.'

'If a dead person resurrects, then this sounds a bit different from the Undead body?'

Undead body uses black magic to recall the reaper above ground. However, they aren't actually alive. They are corpses moving with the help of magical energy.

Carlos answered.

'Yes. It isn't the Undead body. This is a true rebirth.'

'Is it possible? Even if it is Atein....'

'I've concluded that it is possible, but even I can't replicate it.'

'Mmmm. If you concluded that it could happen then I guess it's possible.'

Azell trusted Carlos' judgement. At the very least, his predictions never missed the mark when it was related to magic.

Azell asked.

'Then he could have already resurrected by the time I woke up?'

‘I don’t know. He could have revived or he could have failed to revive.’

‘What kind of an irresponsible answer is that?’

‘This will happen after I die, so why should I care? You have to live in the future, so I have to overcome my annoyance to give you a warning. Be thankful.’

‘That is really like you.’

Azell laughed bitterly.

Carlos spoke.

‘When you woke up, I don’t know how many of the arrangements I made had survived. I hope most of it survived, and it’ll be a help to you.’

‘So there is no guarantee any of it have survived?’

‘Just think about what you did while you were living. You robbed many ancient ruins and mazes. After I am dead, how can I guarantee the arrangements I made won’t meet the same fate? If one buries a treasure, then someone will always dig it back up.’

‘Mmm. That is true....’

The ruin, where Azell was asleep, was placed where not many humans would travel. However, the ruin was eventually found and a massive excavation work began. Didn't Azell wake up because of it?

Suddenly Azell asked a question.

‘Why have you appeared now? Why didn't you show up when I first awoke?’

‘I guess it is because you didn't come out of the ruins using the normal procedure.’

‘Huh?’

‘You didn't get any of the items I prepared for you before coming out?’

‘...correct.’

‘Since it is none other than you, I thought that possibility would be high. Without the power of the ruin, this remnant wouldn't have shown up in front of you.’

It wasn't an easy task to maintain the remnant inside someone else's magical pulse for around 200 years. It was only possible for Carlos, who was an archmage.

‘Inside the ruin, I left a map indicating where all the items you have to earn is located at. However...’

‘However?’

‘The fact that the remnant of my thoughts have appeared, it means the ruin is slowly losing its defensive powers, and it is transitioning into an emergency state.’

‘What?’

‘Someone broke through the protective system from the outside, so I appeared here to tell you the important informations. Also... When you are really in trouble, something you need will appear once and lend a helping hand..’ (TLN: it’s either something he needs or something that is needed – he is making a vague statement)

‘What do you mean by something I need?’

‘You will find out soon. Therefore... Live well.’

While laughing bitterly, Carlos disappeared from Azell’s dream.

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“I can’t believe he became bald.....”

Azell's eyes naturally opened, and he muttered.

The words he muttered came out of nowhere, so Arrieta asked.

“What are you talking about?”

“Never mind. I was talking about my dream.”

Carlos' appearance in the dream was shocking. He used to be a cold handsome man who used to steal the heart of numerous ladies. However, he lost all his hair when he grew old.

Moreover, the fact that he had aged was shocking in itself. He had never thought he would be able to live and see his friend get old. Azell had never imagined it before.

Suddenly, this made him realize anew that he (TLN:Carlos) had died, while he slept.

Azell thought about the fact that he had been thrown into the far future by himself, and it made him feel lonely.



# Chapter 18 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (3)

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‘Atein is going to revive....’

Azell had put his life on the line to take down his arch-nemesis.

The fact that he could be revived made him feel out of sorts. It wasn't the fact that the dead bastard could be revived. It is strange to say it, but it wasn't surprising to see someone dead be revived.

‘It is quite common to see the Undead.’

The incident of raising the dead through black magic was very common. At the very least, it was like that in the Dragon Demon war. After a difficult battle, they were able to kill the Dragon Demon race, but the dead bastards would come back not too long after as a half-rotten corpse.

They would yell.....

‘I can't crawl back into my grave until I have killed you all.’

The enemy who was burning for revenge had to be defeated once again, and this had happened around 10 times. The bastards killed by Azell came back as an Undead. Therefore, he could shrug it off as if it wasn't a big deal since ‘it could happen’. Still, this was a bit different. A completely dead entity was trying to revive across a very long period of time....

‘Maybe there is a connection as to why I woke up in this time period?’

The idea was entirely groundless. Didn’t Carlos’ remnant say he didn’t know if the revival was possible or not?

However, the more he thought about it, his heart beat faster. Maybe it was destined for Azell and Atein to fight once again in this time period. Then wouldn’t this give purpose to Azell, who was separated from the people he knew and flung into this time period by himself?

‘However, I have to learn and adapt to this time period first.’

Azell took one deep breath, and he shook off the thought. Then he started focusing on his current reality.

Arrieta was looking at him as if he was a really strange person. It was funny to see a young girl stare at him like that, so Azell laughed.

‘She is a type I haven’t seen even in the Dragon Demon war.’

It was common to see teens fighting in the war. At the time, everyone who had a bit of strength had to fight.

However, even then there weren’t anyone like Arrieta. She was the Dragon Demon Princess. She was a living proof that the humans and the Dragon Demon could coexist with each other. He

was curious as to what kind of fate she carried.

‘At the very least, it can’t be comfortable.’

Once the Dragon Demon war had ended, he expected a peaceful time to come where everyone would be able laugh. However, Carlos believed that humans were an unreliable existence. He predicted there would be another different disaster coming... At the very least, Azell thought that it would be peaceful until the world could heal from the wound caused by the Dragon Demon race. He went to sleep with this expectation.

However, by looking at Arrieta, he could surmise that the world hadn’t improved much in the past 220 years. This young girl had to fight in battles with her life on the line, because of the station she was born into. She was deeply skeptical of humans as if it was par for the course.....

Suddenly Arrieta asked a question.

“Why are you staring at me like that?”

“Mmmm. What do you mean by that?”

“It is as if you are looking at a novel(TLN:unusual) animal.”

“...my eyes are doing that?”

Somehow he couldn't accept it. At the very least, she could have said it was a gaze filled with sympathy.

“Still, it was a weird gaze. Fortunately, it wasn't perverted. If it was then I would have hit you.”

“I think princess is a bit too young for me to look at you like that.”

“You have an unknown background yet you are speaking like that towards a person of royal blood. If we were in the palace, you would have been charged with high treason.”

“Fortunately, we aren't at the palace.”

“That is true.”

“Also, it is pretty dark right now so I think it is reasonable to look at you like that.”

“I don't believe that you wouldn't be able to see me in this degree of darkness.”

It was as she said. If he was a normal person then he would have difficulty seeing what was beneath his foot in this darkness. Azell and Arrieta had no difficulty seeing each other.

“Still, you said I'm young.... I haven't heard those words in a

long time.”

Arrieta mumbled bashfully, and it made her look like a young girl akin to when she was asleep.

‘Normally she must be self conscious so she puts on an overbearing attitude?’

She was able to get away with such an attitude, because her looks were very unique and beautiful. Her hair was white as snow, and she had the skin of a porcelain doll. Moreover, her yellow eyes and the green feather-like horn sprouting above her left ear came together to form her looks, which was extremely mysterious.

Suddenly Arrieta asked a question.

“Azell.”

“Yes.”

“How old are you?”

“This year... Mmmm. I don’t think I’ve passed 30 yet. Maybe 26 or 27?”

If he excluded the 220 years he was asleep then he was 26 year old.

“.....so you aren’t really that much older than me?”

“Jeez. Even if we consider the lowest age of 26, isn’t there a 9 year difference? When I was 9 year old, you probably weren’t even born.”

“Hmmm. That was then this is now. I don’t think I should be treated like a kid.”

“Did I offend you?”

“No, it was just peculiar. However, you don’t look that young in my eyes.”

“Really? How old do I look?”

“Maybe around 40 year old?”

“.....”

“For real.”

Azell became sad. He had self-confidence that he was a tender young man. However, he had grown a scraggly beard, and he purposefully avoided grooming himself. Now he had to hear that he looked like a 40 year old!

‘Shit.’

I don’t care what other guys says, but he felt sad when a beautiful girl said it. Azell promised himself that he would immediately cut off his beard when he had the spare time.

Arrieta spoke.

“I learned how to wield a sword since I was seven year old. When I came of age at 15, my mind had to become like one of the warriors.”

From that moment on, she had to go out to battle and fight. The throne decided where she should be deployed, and she was praised by the people wherever she went.

‘The throne has sent the Dragon Demon Princess to fight for us. She is the born from the union of the king and the Dragon Demon race. She is the proof that we can live along side the Dragon Demon race.’

This was what her subjects thought. The Dragon Demon Prince and Dragon Demon Princess were significant existences.

“I don’t think I’ve ever heard myself referred as being young after that. That is why I said your words were peculiar.”

“That kind of life.... What do you think about it?”

Azell carefully queried. Arrieta blankly stared at the empty air, while answering back.

“Truthfully, I don’t know. Since my childhood, everyone told me it was my duty. I was born for this reason, and I have to live this way.....”

“Weren’t you scared?”

“I was scared when I entered into my first actual battle.”

After she finished her coming of age ceremony at 15 year old, she had stepped on to a battle field for the first time... Arrieta could never forget that incident until the day she died.

“It was nothing. In fact, I didn’t even get a scratch.”

However, others died instead of her. She had hesitated, while not really understanding the situation. During this time, the powerless soldiers had died. Arrieta could never forget that incident. Even now the faces of the soldiers, who had died at that time, would emerge in her mind.

Suddenly, Arrieta asked a question.

“How about you?”



“What do you mean?”

“You first actual battle.”

“Mmmm. I don’t know.”

“You don’t remember it?”

“I don’t remember it exactly. However, I think I was around 10 year old.”

“Ten year old?”

Arrieta was surprised. The Rulain kingdom’s conscription age was 15 year old. One could enlist only after having one’s coming of age ceremony.

Azell laughed bitterly.

“I don’t remember most of it. However... It was a time when everyone was starving.”

The Dragon Demon War erupted when Azell was 7 year old. It lasted 17 years, and it had concluded after leaving a huge scar on the whole continent.

“It was a period of time when everyone was starving, so there

were a lot of people turning to banditry.”

When humanity faced the enormous enemy called the Dragon Demon race, everyone joined forces and it transcended nationality, gender or status. However, not every human was of noble character. Inside the chaos, there were a mountain of humans that acted worse than beasts.

Azell explained an appropriately edited version of the truth.

“Men like them raided the place I lived. I fought and kill them. That was my first real battle.”

Azell didn't have any memories of his parents. He was able to find out about his surname, 'Zestringer', through the keepsake left to him. He was one of the orphan refugees produced from the Dragon Demon war. He wandered around following other people, and he was able to settle in the mountainous regions until he was 10 year old.

His first battle was standing up against the attacking bandits, and it was also the memory of his first kill.

Arrieta was shocked.

“Such things happen in this world.....”

“I had no power, and I was young... When the moment came, I had no choice but to fight.”

“I asked about a useless matter. I’m sorry.”

“It isn’t something you should apologize for. I asked about princess’ past so we are even.”

“Is that so.”

Arrieta looked at Azell with curious eyes.

He was a strange man. He had endless amount of suspicious characteristics, yet she discovered that she trusted and relied on him. She was so comfortable with his presence that she unwittingly told him her story she had bottled up within.

For a moment, there was an awkward silence. Arrieta hesitated before she remembered a topic.

“Who did you learn your swordsmanship from?”

“I didn’t learn it from one person. The first sword art I learned was from an old militia man in a town I was staying in.

Azell never had a master, who had taken responsibility for him and taught him from start to finish. Little by little, he learned the swordsmanship and spirit order from the people he had crossed path with.

It was a common occurrence that happens on the battle field. Unless one is born from a warrior family, one doesn't systematically learn martial arts and spirit order, while growing up. If one had money then one could invite an instructor to learn from him, but there weren't that many people born into such blessed environment.

It was hard to progress when your situation was like a barren desert. However, only those who can survive through it is revered as strong.

“If I had to name my masters, then I would select about 5 people.”

These were the people who had helped Azell over the walls he encountered when he was growing up. The current Azell wouldn't exist if not for these people who had guided him and gave him what they had without sparing anything.

Arrieta spoke.

“I've never seen someone fight like you.”

“Is that right?”

“I was especially surprised that you don't have any attachment to your swords.”

“Weapons are disposable items.”

“The people who taught me about the sword said I should think of my sword as my life.”

“They were knights.”

“Yes.”

“Well, you can think of it like that. However, I think differently. I’d rather let go of the sword and live rather than die while holding the sword.

Azell fought like that since his first real battle. He didn’t have any weapons, so he had led the bandits toward a trap. Then he stole their weapon and killed them.

Arrieta smiled.

“You are really an amazing person.”

“I guess that’s better than hearing that I’m weird.”

Azell also smiled at her.

## Chapter 19 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (4)

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Contrary to Azell's fear, the Dragon's Shadow didn't attack them even when the day brightened. They had failed to capture the party again after the party escaped their surveillance.

It wasn't an easy task to find a lost target in a vast forest. Moreover, Azell and Arrieta spent sufficient efforts to evade the enemy's attention.

Arrieta was impressed.

“Your Art of Concealment is very mysterious.”

Azell was great at using his ability to hide his body. He used his Art of Concealment to hide himself, and he also used it to hide his party members. For a short amount of time, they basically ceased to exist. Even the most sensitive demonic beast passed by without seeing them.

Azell spoke.

“We are fortunate that our enemies aren't soldiers.”

“Why?”

“If our enemies had the abilities of the scouts from the Western Border Guards, then we wouldn't have been able to escape. They

would have found the tracks made by our movement.”

Azell had a wealth of experience, but he didn't really know how to cover their track inside a forest. Their enemies were trying to track and find them through magic, so they were able to counter against it. If they were following their tracks then maybe they would already been caught.

Arrieta was convinced by his words.

“I see.”

They started intermittently moving at an explosive speed. Azell had Rick on his back, and Arrieta carried Enora. They climbed a tree, and they started jumping between the trees. They used this method to move around 100 meters. This method of moving fast also helped in thwarting the enemy's prediction of their movements.

If Arrieta was alone, she would have already arrived at the destination. However, Azell was lacking in magical force, so the distance he could move at once was limited.

‘It's been awhile since I have felt the frustration of not having enough magical force.’

Azell mediated to recover his magical force then he breathed.

Whether it was stamina, physical strength or magical force,

everything was lacking. The magical force stressed him the most, because it quickly ran out when he wanted to use a Spirit Order technique.

If he was fighting an enemy, he didn't need to ration his use of magical force. He just used it explosively in the moment of his need. However, he had to constantly move right now. He had to use magical force, while minding his surrounding, so the shortage of magical force was a problem.

‘This is straining my physical strength.’

For nearly a day, they moved inside the forest while only drinking water. If they hadn't slept at night then they probably would have collapsed. Rick and Enora would have, not Azell.

Truthfully, Enora didn't have the strength to walk anymore so Arrieta carried her.

Suddenly Azell asked a question.

“Princess. By any chance, do you know how far we are from the fortress?”

“I believe we'll arrive there in about 30 minutes.”

“Unfortunately, it is too far.”



“Why so?”

Arrieta felt a sense of danger contained in Azell’s words.

Azell replied back.

“Focus on the vibration beneath your feet.”

“Vibrations?”

Arrieta followed his words. Then she detected the vibration transmitted from deep with the forest.

“Is someone coming towards us beneath the ground?”

Arrieta spoke while thinking about Kirion. However, Azell shook his head from side to side.

“No.”

Arieta looked at Azell’s face, who was replying. This was the most serious face she had seen on him.

Koo-roo-roo-roo-ro.....

At that moment, the vibration had become strong enough that Rick and Enora could also sense it.

Azell yelled.

“A dragon is coming. Evade it!”

After a moment, the surface they were standing on collapsed when a large existence ramaged below. Then a large amount of dirt exploded forth.

Koo-gwa-ah-ah-ahg!

A large shadow jumped out from below. It was hard to belive that such a large being could travel within the earth. The silhouette looked like an elongated lizard, and it had dark brown scales that had a rock-like texture. It had a curved horn, and its red eyes were slit vertically. From head to tail, it measured over 30 meters, and it was a monster with a castle-like bulk.

It was a tyrant located on top of the food chain. None of the demonic beasts or monsters could rival it. This was a dragon.

“It really is a dragon!”

Arrieta was taken aback.

As a Dragon Demon, she was able to sense its existence when the dragon was nearby. However, she had never faced a dragon before so her instincts was stimulated in an uncertain way.

When the surface exploded and the monster soared into the sky, she could only be shocked at that moment.

Such a large being moved inside the earth, and it had leaped tens of meters above the ground!

The dragon's bulk was so large that it slowly fell in an arc. Once the small hill-sized dragon landed, a cloud of dust burst forth like an explosion.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goong!

The ground shook as it landed and the Earth Dragon's form slid across the ground. The ground turned upside down and the beautiful trees snapped like straws as it was blown away.

“What in the world...”

Arrieta forgot what she was about to say.

She had seen many large monsters during her lifetime. It was her job to confront them when they harass her subjects. However, the dragon was bigger and more unrealistic compared to any other beings she had seen.

Azell's voice was heard near Arrieta's ears, who was standing there absent-mindedly.

“These bastards know of a way to mobilize a dragon.....”

Arrieta was surprised when she saw him. He had draped Rick over his right shoulder, and Enora was carried on the left side.

The approaching dragon’s oppressive presence made her dazed. She didn’t even think about evacuating the two of them.

Arrieta’s face turned red in embarrassment.

Azell spoke as if he didn’t see anything.

“If the dragon is tracking us then we won’t be able to escape.”

“Why?”

“Dragons are able to strongly sense the presence of Dragon Demons and humans.”

“It can do that?”

This was the first time Arrieta had faced a dragon, so she wasn’t aware of this fact.

However, she was able to strongly sense the dragon approaching so conversely she couldn’t protest if the other could do the same.

Suddenly, a hoarse woman's voice was heard.

“You know a lot about dragons.”

Regina's figure appeared between the trees. At the same time, Azell was able to detect the other enemies through the 'Sight' on him.

“There are two more, Princess.”

“I have no idea how you are able to sense our presence. Do we smell?”

Jackal showed himself, while grumbling, and another similarly dress person was also there.

‘That bastard isn't Kirion.’

Azell was able to tell he wasn't Kirion. I guess he didn't come out, because of the injuries he suffered yesterday?

“That's right. You guys smell like fungus infected feet, and there is a sewer-like smell mixed in there also. Why don't you guys wash yourselves before moving around?”

Azell tried to provoke them.

Their Art of Concealment was truly surprising. However, if their gazes were on Azell, then the fact that they are ‘looking’ at him couldn’t be hidden.

Regina spoke.

“Feel free to chatter. This will be your grave, ominously named one.”

Koong! Koong! Koo-oong! (TLN: boom)

The large red-eyed Earth Dragon was approaching from behind her.

---

Azell asked her a question.

“There is one thing I am curious about...”

“What is it?”

“What do mean by my name is ominous?”

“You don’t have to know about it.”

“Is it because my name is identical to Azell Karzark?”

“.....”

Regina was startled at Azell’s probing words. He couldn’t see her face, because of the veil of darkness yet he could tell she was agitated.

Regina spoke.

“...how did you know?”

“I just guessed it.”

Azell laughed detestably. Then he spoke.

“So the organization called ‘Dragon’s Shadow’ must have some connection to the Dragon Demon King Atein.”

“I want to say you are very perceptive, but... It makes me question whether or not you have some ability to read minds.”

Regina spoke coldly.

Arrieta mumbled to herself.

“They are worshippers of the Dragon Demon King? No wonder.”

“Worshippers of the Dragon Demon King? There is such a thing?”

Azell was taken aback.

Azell didn't know about it since he was asleep for a long time after the Dragon Demon war had ended, but numerous worshippers of the Dragon Demon King had appeared afterwards.

The wicked religious belief was mainly centered around the Dragon Demon race, but some humans agreed with them.

Humans should have equal rights. However, the origin of a person was judged by each other's worth, and it was wrongly divided by class.

The Dragon Demon race were the most superior entity on the surface of the earth that could stand above all others. If the humans were conquered by the Dragon Demon race then everyone under them will live equally....

There were several organizations who had this ideology. However, they all held a common belief that Dragon Demon King Atein would revive someday to create a righteous world. (TLN:Humans are suppose to have equal rights, but class system/wealth makes it impossible for all humans to be equal. So if there was an race that was superior to human in charge of them then all humans would become equal in their eyes. It's a twisted logic.)



Azell spoke.

“I’m at a loss for words.”

Azell had needled Regina, because he had a groundwork of a conjecture from the information given to him by Carlos.

It is the fact that the Dragon Demon King is going to revive.

These people were connected to Atein’s will, and they were secretly working to revive him.

From Azell’s perspective, it was matter of course for him to connect the dots.

She said the name Azell was ominous enough for him to die, and this also helped to further support his speculation.

Azell spoke.

“So you are trying to kidnap the princess and use her in some nefarious work?”

“I have no obligation to answer that.”

“You don’t have to answer it. Also... Is that dragon an ace up

your sleeve?”

“Indeed.”

Regina was full of confidence. She was sure that an Earth Dragon and 3 members of the Dragon’s Shadow would be able to subdue Arrieta, and kill Azell, Rick and Enora.

Then the Earth Dragon moved.

Kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa!

The Earth Dragon’s body disappeared as if it was sinking into the earth. At the same time, the surface was destroyed, and the dirt exploded into the air. It struck Azell and his companion like hail.

“Princess! Take Miss Enora!”

Azell yelled desperately, and he jumped up while carry Rick. After he reached the top of a tree, he jumped higher. From the ground, magical attacks were sent towards him.

Pa-ba-ba-baht!

Azell fell towards the ground after he was hit. Rick screamed.

“Ooh-wa-ahh-ahh-ahh-ahh-ahk!”

However before Azell started to fall, he kicked the air as if there was a surface and it slow his speed. He grabbed on to a branch, and he circled it before landing lightly.

From behind, the large body of the Earth Dragon surged out from the ground accompanying an explosion and it started to attack Arrieta.

“Shit!”

The figure of the Earth Dragon flying out from beneath the surface was akin to a dolphin leaping above the surface of the water. The large body was able to move in such a way, and the sense of reality seemed to crumble just by looking at it.

Arrieta held Enora by her side, and she reflexively swung her sword.

“Oh Evil Darkness, Split!”

Pah-ah-ah-ahng!

A light was emitted from the path of the sword, and it scored a direct hit on the Earth Dragon.

Previously, the light from the sword had slaughtered couple dozens of monsters in a single strike, but it was futile against the

Earth Dragon. The Earth Dragon was delayed for a moment before it started descending as if nothing had happened.

Arrieta was barely able to escape using her Instantaneous Movement technique. However, the magic sent by a member of the Dragon's Shadow approached her the next moment.

“Ooh-ook....!”

It was a magical curse that restricted the movement of its target, and it also decreased the target's bodily function. Regina and her other associates were both powerful magicians, so it was difficult for her to dispel their magic even if it was Arrieta.

## Chapter 20 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (5)

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In the meantime, Jackal dashed out from between the trees like a gale, and he attacked Azell.

Ka-ah-ah-ahng! (TLN: sound of sword ringing)

Azell put Rick down and he faced the sword head-on.

It was a strike where he didn't have time to think. Jackal's sword strike was so fierce that Azell's body started sliding backwards. Jackal spoke in a chaotic manner.

"I'll kill you."

"I don't really want to return those words."

Azell answered indifferently. The ambush collapsed his stance, but he didn't show any signs of panic.

Jackal felt a sense of danger from his expression.

Soo-paht! (TLN: slicing sfx)

The next moment something passed by and it cut his hood. The veil of darkness became turbulent, and the upper portion of the hood was thinly sliced.

“What did you do....!”

Jackal was horrified as he retreated hurriedly. He was sure Azell was being forced back when their swords were locked together. However, a sword attack came from his blind spot.

Azell smiled.

“Well, what do you think I did?”

“Impudent bastard! You are merely a human!”

“How many times in the human history has that line been said? Why don’t you use some creativity? Has your head hardened from having a stupid dragon’s blood?:

“You bastard....!”

Jackal burst into a fit of rage at Azell’s provocation yet he couldn’t carelessly rush forward. He had no idea what methods Azell had used.

Azell stared at him indifferently, but he was kicking himself inside.

‘This is bad.’

It was a shame that he wasn't able to critically injure Jackal a moment ago with a decisive blow. Jackal's wariness had gotten too strong, so he wasn't going to rush forward.

Azell had used a simple method. He used his Concealment technique to hide the other sword and at a decisive moment, he used it to attack from a blind spot. Azell's one-handed use of the sword was so natural that Jackal couldn't fathom Azell had using two swords.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo...! (TLN: ground shaking noise)

It was at that moment. The ground shook, and eventually it swelled like wave.

Azell looked towards the Earth Dragon with desperate eyes. Eventually, the Earth Dragon lifted its head.

‘Roar of a Dragon!’

It was an attack method akin to a calamity where the dragon poured out all of its strength at once.

Koo-gwa-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah! (TLN: earth destruction noise)

The earth was overturned and an explosive sound rang out.

The roar centered around the dragon, and the shock wave spread out while being transmitted across the surface of the ground. It killed everything above the ground.

The surface of the earth was peeled off as a whole, and all the grasses and trees on the surface was blown away. The massive amount of earth dropped like hail after exploding, and it covered everything.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....(TLN: earth shaking sfx)

A radius of couple hundred meters shook, and the cloud of dust that had magnificently risen started to settle down.

---

The dragon was basically an existence akin to a walking disaster.

The physical rampage of such a large existence would cause enormous damage yet it also had mastery over the natural phenomena of the same element. It had the power to freely control the earth.

Fortunately, the dragons rarely bumped against the humans.

If one looked at their habits, they set their territory and reigned over it like tyrants. They were similar to wild animals. Moreover, they were reluctant to approach human territories to an abnormal degree.



Despite this fact, the humans gathered a lot of information on the dragons. Once in awhile, the human population had collided with a dragon. The damage caused by one of them was so vast that it was almost unbelievable.

Even if she had learned about them.... Arrieta realized the truth. She really didn't know anything about a dragon.

‘I'm no match against it.’

In the past two years, she had faced evil black magicians and even a crazed Dragon Demon. The fact that she had such experiences enabled her to stay calm when confronting the members of the Dragon's Shadow.

However, the Earth dragon in front of her eyes was on a different level. Her hands were full just from running and escaping the large body that was attacking her.

‘Enora....’

Moreover, Arrieta had someone she had to protect. Enora had a pale complexion and she had fainted, while being held by Arrieta. A normal young girl couldn't cope with such a situation. Also, there was a lot of physical burden being applied to her.....

‘It'll be dangerous if I continue to use the Instantaneous Movement method.’

The Instantaneous Movement method allowed one to move a distance of several dozen meters in an instant, but it puts a huge load on the body.

As a Dragon Demon, Arrieta was endowed with a body that couldn't be compared to a normal person. She was unrivalled in her strength and sturdiness. The Dragon Demon Magic protected her.

However, Enora had fainted under the pressure of just one Instantaneous Movement.

Koong! Koo-oong.....! (TLN: dragon footstep sfx)

The Earth Dragon pushed through the dust storm in front of her, and its approaching footsteps rang out.

Could she evade while not using the Instantaneous Movement method? Every time the Earth Dragon moved the surrounding became widely devastated. Moreover, the members of the Dragon's shadow kept holding onto her ankles.

‘It won't work....’

Arrieta felt a dark despair. Had she ever been in a situation in her life where there wasn't an answer to a solution?

It was at that moment.

“I have no choice.”

She heard Azell’s voice.

Arrieta was surprised so she turned to look at the direction where the voice came from. Azell was walking toward her with Rick draped around him, and he was flicking blood off of his sword.

Arrieta muttered to herself absent-mindedly.

“Azell Zestringer....”

“It isn’t my style to flip a card without seeing what’s behind it.... Carlos is perverse even in his death.” (TLN: Azell thinks Carlos is involved somehow)

Azell smirked then he put down Rick beside Arrieta. At that moment, a voice filled with hatred was heard.

“You bastard....!”

“You are still alive after being hit by that? You are very sturdy.”

Azell already knew about this yet he spoke shamelessly. Beyond the dust cloud, Jackal’s stumbling figure was revealed. However,

there was a large cut across his chest and he was losing a lot of blood.

A moment ago when the Earth Dragon let out its Roar of the Dragon, Jackal was taken aback so he was completely defenseless. Instead of evading the approaching catastrophe, he prioritized attacking Jackal.

This resulted in Jackal being critically injured. Even if he was a Dragon Demon with a sturdy physique, he was in danger if he didn't get immediate healing.

Azell snorted.

“Hoong.(TLN: noise made by nose, hmmph) I wanted to end your life... Now I don't have the time to deal with someone like you.”

“What did you say? Bastarrrrrrrd.....!”

“Jackal! Stop!”

Regina was too late in understanding the situation. She yelled desperately. However, it was after Jackal had exploded. The Dragon Demon Magic responded to his anger, and a storm-like wave poured out. Jackal attacked Azell, while surrounded by blue flames.

Poo-ook! (TLN: sound of blade piercing flesh)

A horrifying sound of destruction rang out.

“Uh....?”

Jackal, who had just used the Instantaneous Movement method to attack Azell, suddenly came to a stop, and an idiotic moan leaked out.

The two swords were pierced through his body like skewers.

“Where in the hell did this...”

“Didn’t I tell you? I have no time to deal with someone like you.”

Azell laughed coldly. Then he stared at Jackal with eyes filled with contempt.

“I can manipulate the Sight and read the flow of thought. Someone who doesn’t even have the eyes to observe one’s opponent dares to fight against me.... Apologize to the strong power you possess. Are all the Dragon Demons these days of low quality?”

Azell hadn’t lost Jackal’s location for even a moment. He predicted which direction he’ll come from after he had inflicted the critical wound. He used the two hidden swords to set up a trap. He had injected his magical force beforehand, and its flight was

controlled remotely. It was easy for Azell to perform this skill.

“You.. Stupid....”

Jackal died immediately after his lung and heart was pierced.

Regina and her companion shuddered. Instead of feeling angry about their companion dying in front of them, the fear they felt for Azell, who was staring at them with cold eyes, was larger.

‘What is this guy?’

They could only feel a fistful of magical energy from him. Until now, she had killed countless number of humans with stronger magical energy than him.

However... She couldn't see the floor. (TLN: it's a metaphor)

Objectively, the difference between their power was absolutely immense, but he used ridiculous methods to defeat his opponents every time. What kinds of a magic was he using?

Koong.. Koong... Koo-oong.....! (TLN:footstep sfx)

While he was in a confrontation, the Earth Dragon came closer during that time. Azell spoke.

“Princess. Escape with Rick and Miss Enora.”

“...what?”

“I’ll block the dragon.”

“What, what are you talking about?”

Arrieta was taken aback.

She knew Azell was strong. One couldn’t assess his true strength just by looking at his outer appearance. At the very least, Arrieta couldn’t even reach the tip of his toes in terms of mastery over battle techniques.

However... It was an entirely different matter when facing a dragon. Even if he was extremely skilled, if he didn’t have overwhelming strength then how could he face a dragon?

Azell laughed bitterly.

“To tell you the truth, I... I have a really perverse friend.”

“.....?”

“This person always wants to see a person at their worst. Even though he could help immediately, he wants to see a person

cornered so he could evaluate the worth of a person. Well. Occasionally, you might not believe this, but sometimes he waits for the exact moment where he could could take credit for everything.”

“...he doesn’t sound like a human I want to associate with.”

“You’re right. However, if he acknowledges your worth then he’ll treat you very well. He’ll even put his life on the line for you.”

Carlos was such a man in Azell’s memories. Everyone avoided him yet he was so talented that people had no choice, but to rely on him. He was an eccentric magician.

“That is why I trust him.” (TLN: I think he is assuming Carlos put some contingency plan in place)

“What does that have to do with this situation?”

“It’s relevant.”

After speaking those words, Azell stepped in front of the Earth Dragon. The Earth Dragon stopped and turned its head questioningly as if it had responded to Azell’s gaze.

“Dragon.”

Azell spoke.



“My name is Azell Zestringer.”

Then the name of an absolute trial that was buried within his memories leaked out of his mouth.

“I’ll challenge you to the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

---

Kirion, a member of Dragon’s Shadow, was inside the underground building, which was assumed to be Carlos’ ruin.

He was ordered to look over the ruins with the backup that had arrived, because he had been injured the day before by Azell. He was dissatisfied, but it was an order from Regina, who held a higher position than him.

“Every time we approach anything it gets wasted.”

Kirion’s voice revealed a trace of anger, and the back up from the association grumbled.

“It can’t be helped. Initially, it must have been decided that whatever inside wouldn’t be turned over to an outsider.”

There was a limit to how many reinforcement that could be dispatched in one day to an isolated location. Another Dragon

Demon magician like Kirion had come here.

He was a dark magician that gave off a dark energy. Kirion also treated human lives as if it was worth no more than that of a fly, but he didn't use the death itself as a tool like this black magician. He shuddered at the energy emitted by the black magician.

However, his skill was undeniable. Kirion used every method at his disposal yet he couldn't open the ruin's defensive barrier. The black magician opened it in just 12 hours.

However, the trouble came afterwards.

## Chapter 21 - Dragon Slayer's Ritual (6)

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Unlike their worries, the ruin didn't have any systems that'll threaten the lives of the intruders. However, the items that was stored inside and the relics that was acknowledged to have value by the Archmage Carlos was destroyed when they approached it.

The black magician spoke.

“I have no idea what the purpose of this ruin is. The relics are ruined just from a touch by an outsider....”

Normal ruins were a space where one stores valuable relics. Therefore, there were strong defensive systems placed to protect the relics. It was rare to see an extreme method like this where the relics were destroyed before it could be taken by the intruders.

Still, this ruin was weird. There weren't any strong defensive systems yet it would make the relics inoperable if a intruder got close.

“This is the only place left....”

Kirion and the black magician arrived at the cetral portion of the ruin.

While they were coming here, they could only watch as seven relics were wasted.

Then at the central room... There was a blue and white light coming from something like a crystal.

Kirion mumbled.

“What is this? Is it a spirit? Or is it an energy source?”

The structure was made from light, and the object didn't feel like it was real. It was assumed to be a spirit integrated with a strong power or an energy source..

However, the black magician disagreed with him.

“No, it is a closed space.”

“Closed space?”

“A very dense closed space is surrounding something. However....”

The black magician used his magic to make contact with it. It was at that moment.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-oong.....! (TLN: think light saber noise)

Suddenly, the light structure started to vibrate violently, and it started to open. Kirion and the black magician retreated in

surprise.

“What is it?”

“I have no idea. However, be ready for an impact.”

The black magician’s expression was pensive, and he deployed his barrier. The magical force emitted by the light structure was immense. If its purpose was to cause destruction through an explosion, then it would easily blow this ruin in a flash.

However, none of what they feared came to fruition. The violently vibrating light structure suddenly disappeared as if it had flickered out.

Kirion dumbly muttered to himself.

“What was that?”

“I believe....”

The black magician continued to speak as he stroked his chin.

“It must have flown somewhere by leaping through space.”

---

Arrieta dumbly mumbled to herself.

“Dragon Slayer’s Ritual? What is that?”

Azell was resolutely staring at the Earth Dragon, but his spirits fell at her words. He looked at Arrieta as if he was amazed.

“You don’t know about the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual?”

“It’s the first time I’ve heard of it.”

“...what has happened to this time period?”

Azell mumbled in low spirits.

Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

According to legends, the dragons made a pact with the humans and this was the ritual that had been passed down.

If a human had wisdom that the dragons coveted then the dragons would accept the Dragon Slayer’s ritual. The dragons rarely refused the ritual. The reason being the ritual was a method used by the dragons to acquire something they really wanted, which was wisdom.

The ritual was a one-on-one mortal combat. The dragon and the

one who challenged the dragon fight one-on-one. This was different from a dragon just eating a human. By being victorious in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, the dragon could absorb part of the challenger's wisdom as its own.

If the challenger wins and slays the dragon, then the challenger drinks the dragon's blood to gain part of its power. The human and dragon put their life on the line, and it was a battle fought to gain either wisdom or strength. This was the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Arrieta was taken aback when she heard the description.

"This is the first time I've heard of this."

"...I really don't now what has happened during all this time."

Azell felt frustrated as he mumbled to himself then he glared at the Earth Dragon.

After a moment, the Earth Dragon nodded its head. It gestured to accept the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

"Ok."

Azell raised his sword, and pointed it at Regina.

"You said you were Regina? I'll warn you since you might not know anything about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. There is a

condition one must adhere to. It is the fact that this is a one-on-one battle.”

During the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual between Azell and the Earth Dragon, no one is allowed to intervene. The one who interferes will receive the dragon’s wrath.

“What?”

This was the first time Regina had heard about this fact, so she was taken aback.

Azell turned back toward Arrieta and spoke.

“Please take care of Rick and Ms Enora.”

“You really are thinking about challenging the dragon alone?”

“I’m not thinking about it. I’ve already done so. The Dragon Slayer’s Ritual started once the dragon agreed to it. I cannot back out of it now. Therefore... Please leave.”

Azell smiled, while looking at Arrieta. He looked at her golden eyes, which was filled with embarrassment, and it reminded him of old days.

“Yes. Do I need a reason for putting my life on the line for others?”



It had always been that way. He had taken up a sword and put his life on the line, just so he could save someone's life even if he didn't know the person that well.

If he was a loner then he would have a hard time doing this. He would have given her to the enemy, and he would have escaped by himself in the end. Even though he complained, he had decided to stick by her side. This moment had already been heralded.

“Princess’ responsibility is to take care of the aftermath. If we survive this then we’ll meet again.”

“Wait.....!”

Azell ignored her words, and he ran towards the Earth Dragon. Finally the Dragon Slayer's Ritual had started.

A large wall of earth sprang up in front of Azell, who was using the Instantaneous Movement method to move. Azell immediately changed direction, and he escaped to the side. This was the direction where Regina and her companion were located at. At that moment, the two here taken aback when Azell appeared in front of them.

The Earth Dragon howled.

Koo-ah-ah-ah-ah!

The surface flipped in its entirety, and a wave of earth flew towards him.

“I’ve always like surfing!”

Azell accelerated while saying this. Regina was shocked.

“No!?”

Surprising, Azell was running while riding the wave of earth that was surging forth. He ran toward the crest of the surging wave of earth, and he jumped over it.

Afterwards, the wave of earth fell on them. The duo escaped from that place, while spitting out curses.

“Ha-ah!”

Azell had created a situation he wanted and when he reached the crest of the earth wave, he used the Instantaneous Movement method to shoot towards the Earth Dragon.

Pa-chang! (TLN: sword sfx)

The Earth Dragon quickly turned its neck, but it was impossible for the large body to dodge. Azell’s sword strike grazed by the Earth Dragon’s neck.

“Kook....!” (TLN: a form of groan)

Azell had pulled off a splendid attack, but his complexion wasn't good. Azell complained.

“Shit. Is it impossible to do this with my current strength?”

The unscathed Earth Dragon looked back towards Azell. Azell's sword strike left only a faint mark on its neck. Most forces wouldn't even be able to wound it.

The current Azell could use every method in his disposal, but he wouldn't be able to wound the dragon. If you don't have strength then you will get slaughtered no matter how outstanding your skill is.

Azell glared at the Earth Dargon with nervous eyes.

He mumbled.

The scale of the dragon was sturdier than steel. Moreover, the dragon possessed powerful magic, which protected its body.

“This should be enough right, Carlos? Give me the item you prepared.”

‘How did you know?’

Suddenly, a foreign voice rang out inside Azell's mind. It was Carlos' voice he had heard inside his dream.

“Is there anyone else who knows you better than me? Even if you aged and became bald, there was no way your personality would have changed for the better right?”

‘I told you to not talk about that subject!’

Carlos' remnant flew into a rage. Azell smirked.

“How would I not know if a remnant had disappeared or not from my energy pulse?”

‘I guess your senses haven't dulled even though you slept until I died.’

Carlos' remnant snorted.

Azell had indirectly spoke about Carlos' story to Arrieta. He had bid farewell to Carlos' remnant inside his dream, but he had already realized that the remnant hadn't disappeared, and it still remained. The remnant had inherited the personality of the Carlos that Azell had known. Until now, the remnant had examined the details of the events as time passed by and he was looking for the golden opportunity where he could take the maximum amount of credit. (TLN: basically he wants to save the day)

“Koo-roo-roo?” (TLN: dragon growl)

The Earth Dragon tilted its head in front of him. It acted strangely as if it could hear the conversation happening inside Azell.

Azell spoke.

“I’m in a crisis where the current me can’t do anything here. Stop being so cantankerous and help me.”

“It can’t be helped.”

The remnant of Carlos sighed.

‘So this will be my real farewell. I wanted to watch a little bit more, but it isn’t going as I want it. I don’t get why my fate is so turbulent.’

“You are right. It was nice seeing you. Really.”

‘You are saying some embarrassing things. Don’t die.’

Carlos’ remnant snorted. The existence that was residing in Azell’s energy pulse extinguished completely. Then the magic trump card that was preserved for 200 years activated.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh! (TLN: energy sfx)

Blinding light started emanating from Azell and the earth shook. The sudden phenomena made the Earth Dragon flinch and it retreated.

Then... A flash of light stabbed down from the sky.

Kwa-gwa-gwang! (TLN: thunder sfx)

Thunderous sound rang out and the earth shook. From inside the light, a sword emanating a blue luster was revealed.

“I guess this is the arrangement you had made.”

From inside the light that was swirling around him, Azell put his hand forward and grasped the sword.

“I couldn’t have guessed you would preserve my Dragon Maken for 220 years... You really deserve to be called an arch-mage. Truly, I would have never imagined this.”

Dragon Maken.

This was the weapon Azell had used to fight against the Dragon Demon King Atein. There was only one like it in this world, and only the owner Azell could use the sword.

The sword was directly shaped by Azell and it was his alter ego.

The sword used Azell's

thoughts and magical energy as nutrients to exist so he hadn't expect it be preserved for 220 years.

Hoo-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh! (TLN: wind sfx)

The light dispersed, and a gust of wind started to rage. Beneath the fluttering red hair, Azell's blue eyes shined more strongly than ever.

Azell appeared while grasping a sword leaking a blue luster. The magical force from the Dragon Maken flowed in and it filled his magical pulse to the brim. His ring of life started vibrating crazily.

"Unfortunately, this is only a momentary miracle....."

Azell's blue eyes was full of luster and he looked at the Earth Dragon.

"I'll show you the strength of a human, who had defeated the Dragon Demon King."

Then the blue storm started to rage.

## Chapter 22 - Dragon Maken (1)

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At that moment, every existence in the continent with the presence of dragon blood shuddered.

“A new Dragon Demon Qi is born.....?”

This was mumbled by a woman lost in meditation inside the darkness. She had strong magical energy wrapped around her body, and she could dimly sense the event happening in a far away place.

Dragon Demon Qi.

It was a refined form of a dragon's power, and it was created using a soul as an ingredient. It was the very definition of a true magical weapon.

Another voice was heard from the darkness.

“Did you say Dragon Demon Qi?”

“How can that be?”

“There is no way the Dragon Demon Qi was born in this era.”

“This era has even forgotten about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”



With that as a start, many voices started flying around.

The woman spoke.

“This sensation.... I’m sure of it. A new Dragon Demon Qi was born outside of our territory.”

“I’ll agree it feels the same. This sensation... I could never forget it.”

“However, there is no way a new Dragon Demon Qi would be born.”

“There is no coincidence in the birth of the Dragon Demon Qi.”

“Everyone should end the transmission, and let us aid in damaging the Spirit Order’s vision.” (TLN: I’m guessing they can interfere from long distance)

They were talking about doing something horrible. One couldn’t tell what they were talking about, but by observing their nuanced talk, it was revealed that they were in the process of performing an act of historic proportions.

“However, the latter explanation is possible. There might be an owner of Dragon Demon Qi we failed to kill. Someone might have woken up from sleep and there is a possibility that he recovered his

Dragon Demon Qi.....”

“According to our records, the last owner of the Dragon Demon Qi, who didn’t belong to us, died 60 years ago. There is no way one could sleep that long.” (TLN: I’m guessing Carlos)

“It might be a real possibility that a new Dragon Demon Qi was born. Could we guarantee that the work we have carried out was perfect? This world is large and isn’t there a lot of humans?”

“Mmmm....!”

A brief silence ensued inside the darkness.

Soon, the woman spoke.

“Currently, I guess he have no choice but to observe. Let us wait until the new master of Dragon Demon Qi reveals himself to the world....”

---

In between the dispersing light fragments, his red hair was fluttering.

Once he grasped the Dragon Maken, which was flowing with blue light, Azell felt power surge into his entire body. The feeling of helplessness, which had weighed him down since his awakening, disappeared. His old self, who had swept through the battle fields

like a storm in the Dragon Demon war, was revived. The energy was making him excited and Azell tried hard to coldly assess the situation.

‘Its condition is better than the time I woke up.’

The Dragon Maken wasn’t in a good condition even if it was emitting a strong power. It was analogous to a person having a hard time getting up when one is sick.

It was inevitable. While the Dragon Maken was hibernating through the winters, it was basically like a wild animal losing all its accumulated energy.

It had even forgotten the name it was given the moment it was born. Azell couldn’t pull out its true ability which he had honed with it.

It had reunited with Azell after jumping over a long period of time, and the only thing it could do was burn its existence. (TLN: basically cannibalize its own energy)

Koo-roo-roo-rooo.... (TLN: growling sfx)

The Earth Dragon shuddered. The quality of power coming from the human, who had challenged it, was very different from before. He was emitting enough pressure for even a dragon to be afraid.

Koong! (TLN: boom!)

The small human took one step and the earth shook.

Koong! (TLN: boom!)

After another step, the atmosphere vibrated and a gust of wind raged.

“Now. Come at me.”

Azell baited the dragon, while smiling.

The human had a presence that was on equal footing with a dragon. Even though the Earth Dragon ran across a situation it didn't understand, it continued to move.

The Dragon Slayer's Ritual had already started. The ritual doesn't end until one side is dead.

Koo-roo-roo-roo..... (TLN: growl)

The Earth Dragon emitted a mighty magical wave. Soon, the Earth Dragon looked to the sky and roared.

Koo-ah-a-ah-ah-ah! (TLN: rawr)

It was the ultimate destructive method emitted by a dragon,

## Dragon's Roar!

The attack that had turned over the earth for a radius of several hundred meter was initiated. The forest that had been ruined was about to go through another catastrophe.

However, Azell's figure disappeared the moment the roar rang out.

Kwa-haha-hat! (TLN: sfx of sword slicing)

The Earth Dragon, who was about to roar, swallowed its breath and it stumbled. A long wound appeared on its neck before the Dragon's Roar could be used, and its red blood splattered.

Koo-uh-uh-ung! (TLN: dragon in pain sfx)

The Earth Dragon screamed in pain. It was the first time in its life it had experienced pain. After hatching from its egg about hundred and couple score years ago, it had gained independence from its parents. After it had settled down in the corner of the Balan Forest, there had been no existence that was able to wound it.

The Earth Dragon heard Azell's voice.

"It turns out it is a young dragon."

Azell was observing the Earth Dragon from atop a half broken tree.

The Earth Dragon had a body larger than a house, so it was strange to hear the expression of it being 'young'. Dragons had a lifespan of several thousand years, but it matured for 30 years. (TLN: main growth happens in the first 30 years of its life) Afterwards, it becomes the ultimate tyrant with no natural enemies.

The Earth Dragon in front of him had finished its growth and it had an adult body. After its growth period ends, it continues to grow minutely, but it was hard to see the change even if couple hundred years had passed.

Still, Azell decided the Earth Dragon was young. He could tell after one battle that it didn't have much experience and it was immature.

'Humans have forgotten the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, but the Dragons haven't forgotten it. While it knows about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, I guess it doesn't know anything about fighting a life-and-death battle?'

The Dragon Slayer's Ritual was a immemorial tradition. It was a pact made between an unknown strong magician and the dragons.

The dragons may be dumb, but the knowledge of the Dragon Slayer's Ritual was etched into their blood and passed on. Similar to every being able breathe without knowing how to breathe, every

dragon knew what the Dragon Slayer's Ritual was.

However, even if they knew about it, it doesn't mean they had carried it out before.

Basically, the dragons do not know how to fight very well. The weapons they were born with were too strong and it let them easily achieve victory just by swinging their weapons.

Therefore, there was a big difference between a dragon who is experienced in fighting, and an inexperienced dragon. Moreover, a dragon, who had experienced the Dragon Slayer's Ritual before, is much more dangerous.

This Earth Dragon fell into neither of those options. This is its first time going through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual and it had never fought against another dragon. Azell was sure of this fact.

'If it was experienced then it wouldn't have used the Dragon's Roar in that fashion.'

Using the Dragon's Roar was an overkill when trying to kill one mere human. It was analogous to using a siege weapon to kill a single ant. While it allows one to pour out its maximum power at once, its defense becomes vulnerable. The power protecting its body becomes weak, and an attack that wouldn't usually scratch it could wound the dragon.

Previously, Azell's strike was able to leave a deep wound because

of this logic.

Koo-roo-roong! Ka-roong! (TLN: more dragon noises)

The Earth Dragon let out a intimidating howl.

Azell was the first strong opponent the dragon has faced. Until now, it had easily killed all of its preys. His threat level was similar to its own race!

During this time, the wound on its neck was rapidly healing. If a human had the same wound then the person would be half dead. However, it had healed as if it was never there.

It had a phenomenal regenerative ability.

‘It’s probably going to get real now?’

It was as Azell predicted. The earth beneath his feet exploded, and stones shot toward him like arrows.

Puh-puh-puh-puh-pung! (TLN: sound of stone hitting trees)

The force of the stone being shot was so strong that it made holes in the beautiful trees.

However, Azell was already gone from that spot. In a flash, he



used the Instantaneous Movement method to change location, and he ran towards the Earth Dragon.

Of course, the Earth Dragon didn't stay in the same place. It hid itself by burrowing into the earth.

‘Alright! That’s more like it.’

Azell realized he was getting excited.

If one thought about it, it was very unlike Azell to wait for the Earth Dragon to heal after the initial attack. Moreover, he should have taken advantage of the Earth Dragon being flustered. He should have settled it in a single bout. If he had done that, then he would have easily succeeded in killing the dragon.

However, during the couple days he had been awake, he had received a lot of stress from his own powerlessness. Now that he had the Dragon Maken in his hand, the desire to experience its power was amplified.

This was why he was committing a illogical act of taking a break even when facing a dragon.

‘I showed a weakness by being drunk on power. I guess it was unavoidable even for me.’ (TLN: he gave the dragon time to heal. he wasn't thinking straight.)

Azell corrected his complacency, and he refocused his mind. He

didn't have enough information about the current world. While he was ignorant, he could easily lose his life if he was careless.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo-goo..... (TLN: sfx of dragon moving through the ground)

The Earth Dragon was moving at high speeds beneath the earth, and the after effect caused the ground to vibrate.

Azell estimated the location of the Earth Dragon. While Azell had his feet on the ground, the Earth Dragon knew his exact location like the back of its hand.

However, Azell also knew the Earth Dragon's location. Now that his power had been recovered by grasping the Dragon Maken, his senses could detect what his eyes couldn't see.

‘Right now!’

Soon, Azell moved at lightning speed and he surrounded his body with Protection Magic.

Pa-hak! (TLN: slashing sound)

The Earth Dragon leapt, and its body cut through the blue light.

‘It was too shallow!’

Blood poured out from the long wound on the Earth Dragon's body.

However, it was too shallow. It had split open the thick hide, but only blood came out. It was comparable to a human getting a slight cut on the skin.

Rather, Azell was the one who had suffered. He rebounded high into the air and his muscle hurt like it had been ripped.

‘Shit! As expected, in my current condition, I can’t just use brute strength.’

Spirit Order allows one to use strength beyond human limits, but in the end, the power is used by a human body. The magical energy is used to painstakingly reinforce the body, and the stronger the body is, the more reinforcement could be used.

However, Azell's current body was pathetic. After being awoken, he had regained his human-like looks, but that was it. He didn't have a good enough foundation to correctly use the power he had received from the Dragon maken.

‘Cheap tricks won't work.’

He was able to achieve tactical victories over all the enemies up until now, but he had to adapt now. He usually secured an advantageous position by deceiving the senses. He used misdirection to catch people off guard.

The problem was these methods wouldn't work against a dragon.

One couldn't mislead a dragon's senses.

It was impossible to artificially distort a dragon's mind or senses using the Spirit Order's mind techniques or magic. This limited most of the tactics Azell could use.

Kyah-ah-ah-ah-ah! (TLN: another dragon sfx)

The Earth Dragon, who was swimming beneath the ground, jumped out. It started to roar and the ground shook. The strong vibrations made it nearly impossible for one to stand upright. Moreover, the already messily upturned ground of the forest to move like a wave.

For a human to display one's strength, it was imperative for the human to have stable footing. If he was a magician then he would have flown through the air like a bird. However he used martial arts and he couldn't use his strength properly when the surface was unstable. This was why it was important to train the lower body, and strengthen one's balance. If it was the old days, Azell would have been able to stand on top of a sword swung by his enemy since he had trained his balance to the extreme.

However, even that degree of balance would be useless in this situation.

The ground continued to crumble, and it was like a antlion's pit. (TLN: you'll have to google it) What else could he do when the ground eroded and shook?

‘It is smarter than I thought.’

Azell regretted the fact that he gave the Earth Dragon a chance to utilize its strength, and he tried to come up with a countermeasure.

He couldn't fall down. Spirit Order didn't have any flight techniques. There existed techniques which allowed one to change direction in mid-air or jump again.

Unfortunately, there weren't any stable surfaces he could step on so he couldn't properly use the Instantaneous Movement method. First, he got on a tree, which was some distance from the ground. This afforded him some freedom of movement.

However, the Earth Dragon would not sit idly by, while Azell escaped.

The ground moved in a wave, and it gathered in one place. The earth started to form the shape of a large hand. Several earth hands formed and flew towards him. It had targeted Azell.

‘It's a construct!’

The dragon used the power of the element it had dominion over.

It was able to make multiple entities, which it could control freely. This was called the Dragon's Construct.

Oooooooooooh! (TLN: sfx construct makes)

The Dragon's Constructs moved toward him, while emitting a strange sound.

---

Azell was able to move by stepping on empty air, but there was a limit to it. The moment his mobility decreased, the Dragon's Constructs swept towards Azell.

“Hmmm!”

The blue sword light danced wildly. Every time he swung his sword a sharp flash of light followed in its trajectory. The Constructs that were struck were cut very easily.

He was able to cut the Dragon's Construct, but he couldn't hold them back. Would an existence formed from earth receive damage from being cut?

However, Azell's sword energy was like a storm.

Every time the sword was swung the atmosphere shook. Moreover, everything within its reach of influence were broken into pieces and dispersed.

Hooooooooooooong! (TLN: sfx of tail moving through air)

The Earth Dragon's tail, which was thicker than a whole tree, flew in like a whip. Azell was defending against the rocks, so he was caught off-guard. It was timed in a way where he didn't have a chance to avoid it.

Azell yelled.

“Shit! Let's do this!”

GGwaaaaaaaaang! (TLN: boom!)

Explosive sound rang out.

A crater formed from the impact, and it shook the earth. In the middle, Azell and the Earth Dragon were flung apart in opposite direction. Azell turned several cycle in the air before he landed on the ground and he slid back an extra several dozen meters.

“Ooh-ook. I almost died.”

He had offset some of the damage by jumping over the terrain. Azell's hand reached toward his nose. There was blood flowing out of his nose. Then the hand gripping the Dragon Maken burst open.

However, it was a low cost for going head-to-head with an attack

that could destroy an entire castle. Also, his opponent didn't escape unscathed.

Koo-roo-roo-roo-roo..... (TLN: another dragon sfx)

The Earth Dragon let out a painful sound. Surprisingly, the Earth Dragon also rolled a couple times on the ground after being thrown from the collision with Azell.

Moreover, the tail that had hit against the Dragon Maken was in a sorry state. The bone had been cut. The tail was hanging on by a thread, and great amount of blood fountained forth.

While in this state, the Earth Dragon's eyes met Azell's, and it was spooked. It roared, while it was gripped with fear.

Kaaaaaaaaaaaah! (TLN: dragon sfx)

The Dragon's Roar exploded forth and the earth flipped over.

"So you still want to continue with the trial of strength?"

Azell was still reeling from the impact. It was too late to dodge with the Instantaneous Movement method.

'Then..... This is my chance!'



Azell held up his Dragon Maken with determination. Magical energy circulated in high speed between his body and his blade. Then light emanated forth.

“Haaaaaaaaaaaaah!”

The ground he was on exploded, but Azell kept his position without moving. The light that was surrounding his body blocked the vibration and the exploding earth out. However, numerous scratches started to form on his body.

Azell focused enough that he forgot about all of his pain. At this moment, he would die if the flow of his power was disturbed even by a small amount!

His Ring of Life vibrated vigorously, and it seemed like it was about to break. The magical energy accelerated inside his energy pulse as if it was about to burn. This brought back the memories from the Dragon Demon War. The moment he faced a strong enemy with his life on the line, he recalled the ultimate skill he used through his sword!

“Here it comes!”

After the shout, his bloody body started to move.

Ggwaroo-rong! Ggwa-roong! (TLN: Thunder sfx)

Beneath the blue sky, thunder rained down and the thunderclap

rang out.

Blue thunderbolts appeared around the Dragon Maken at its center. It flared up while it cut through the tidal wave of earth. From inside, Azell's blue eyes lit up.

‘Thunder Dragon's Horn!’

The body, which had survived the vibrations of the earth being flipped over, accelerated and broke the speed of sound. This was the secret technique he had used in the Dragon Demon War, which allowed him to cut down a Dragon Demon protected by powerful magic in a single strike!

Ggwa-gwa-gwa-gwa-gwang! (TLN: explosion sfx)

The sound of the explosion rang out after the blue streak of lightning had parted the Earth Dragon. (TLN: he broke the sound barrier, so sound was delayed)

It rang out a second late. Similarly, the wave of earth was also parted by Azell, and there was a vacuum between Azell and the dragon.

Koo-rook, ggooo-goo-gook....! (TLN: more dragon sfx )

A big groan came out from the Earth Dragon's mouth, and the impact caused a large cloud of dust to rise up. Inside the cloud of dust, the Earth Dragon's body was cut diagonally, and it sank while

red blood fountained forth.

From beyond the dust, Azell was able to clearly see the shadow of the Earth Dragon fall.

Kooooooooong.....! (TLN: sfx of body hitting ground, boom....!)

The large body of the dragon fell, and the sound of the crash reverberated.

---

It was long after the ground stopped lurching. Azell, who had dirt all over his body, started walking shakily.

“Cole-rok, Cole-rok.(TLN: sound of a wet cough) This is driving me nuts.”

He had defeated the Earth dragon with comparative ease, but Azell wasn't in a good condition. The blood loss from his superficial wound made him dizzy, and he also had a lot of internal damage.

Moreover.....

‘Ah Ah.’

The power that had charged his entire body was slowly leaking

out.

The power he had received from the Dragon Maken was temporary.

The Dragon Maken used his soul as an ingredient, and it was refined using magical energy and the dragon's power. It was a one-of-a-kind ultimate weapon that exists solely for him.

For it to exist, Azell had to be there. It had to resonate with Azell's soul, swallow his thoughts, and be injected with magical energy for it to maintain its existence.

This meant that during Azell's long sleep, the Dragon Maken was destined to slowly lose its sense of self, and it would cease to exist. Carlos deserved to be called an Arch Mage just from the fact that he was able to preserve the Dragon Maken for 220 years. Even though it had jumped through time to return to Azell's hands, it wasn't able to recharge itself from Azell. Instead, it was about to fall apart after giving him the power that formed it.

"I'm sorry."

Azell apologized to the Dragon Maken.

In Azell's way of thinking, weapons were mere tools and he didn't confer any more meaning to it. He had no reasons to cling to it. However, the Dragon Maken was made from his soul and it was made to be his other self. It couldn't talk, but it had a will of its

own. There was an internal sympathetic link between Azell and the sword.

This was why Azell apologized to the Dragon Maken as if it was alive.

Sssssssssss.....

After losing its sense of self, the Dragon Maken disintegrated like dust. Azell looked at the dissipating blue foam, and he made a promise to the Dragon Maken.

“Sooner or later... We’ll meet again.”

He’ll revive the Dragon Maken the day he recovers his former strength.

Once the Dragon Maken disappeared, Azell staggered toward the Earth Dragon’s corpse.

The Dragon Slayer’s Ritual had ended. As the victor, it was time for him to claim his prize.

Azell’s strike had blown half of its body away. Its heart was half gone, but it was still palpitating while blood spurted out.

As the victor of the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, he had to drink the dragon’s blood to obtain part of its strength.

However, he didn't have to drink the enormous quantity of the dragon's blood. The drinking of blood was a symbolic gesture, which completed the ritual.

Azell cupped his hand near the torn heart, and he collected the falling blood. Then he slowly raised it up to his mouth and drank it.

Doo-goon! (TLN: ba-dump)

His heart pulsed.

The life force within his injured body circulated and his wound started to heal quickly.

Doo-goon! Doo-goon! Doo-goon! (TLN: heart beating sfx)

Azell's heart started beating out of control, and this caused him to sit down.

In front of him, the corpse of the Earth Dragon, even all of the blown away parts, started to emit a light.

The lights floated into the air and it gathered towards Azell. The ritual had been passed down since the ancient times, and the loser had to donate everything to the victor.

Ooooooooooooooh! (TLN: energy sfx)

The whirlwind of light wrapped around Azell's figure and amidst these light Azell's consciousness turned white.

# Chapter 23 - The 220 Year Gap (1)

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Arrieta opened her eyes.

“Mmmm.....”

A strange sensation was stimulating her senses. This was why she was waking up from her deep sleep.

‘Is it Dragon Demon magic?’

There was an existence, who possessed Dragon Demon magic, nearby. Did that presence wake her up?

‘No, something is different....’

It felt similar to the Dragon Demon magic she knew, but something was a bit different. She couldn’t explain what was different, but it felt very foreign.

Arrieta soon realized the fact that she was laying on a comfortable bed.

“This is.....”

She knitted her brows. Soon she was able to assess the situation.



This place was the Western Border Fortress.

She remembered the events that had taken place before she had fainted.

Arrieta had taken advantage of the confusion created by the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to escape from that place. However, she had to move, while holding Rick and Enora like baggages, so the members of the Dragon's Shadow quickly caught up to her.

Afterwards, a battle ensued. She had to fight her pursuers every step of the way as she moved closer to the Western Border Fortress.

She hadn't eaten anything for a day yet she had to fight multiple battles so Arrieta was very tired. Moreover, she had to fight an arduous battle with Regina and her partner, while trying to protect Rick and Enora.

Fortunately, the Western Border guard had mobilized before her tank was emptied.

The Earth Dragon's movement was too noisy, so the Western Border Fortress became aware of it. After finding it, they dispatched their main force including their elite troops. Also, the battle between Arrieta and the Dragon's Shadow was noisy, so they were quickly found.

Once the situation turned, the members of the Dragon's Shadow

eventually accepted that their plan had failed. They had no choice, but to retreat.

Arrieta was as exhausted as she could be. She told the Western Border guard about Azell then she had fainted.

Then she had opened her eyes, and this was her current state.

“Mmm.”

Arrieta rang the bell, which was placed next to her bed. Soon a lone soldier opened the door and entered. He spoke carefully, while having a very nervous attitude.

“You have awakened. Princess.”

“Is this the Western Border Fortress?”

“Yes.”

“How much time has passed since I lost consciousness?”

“It has been 4 hours since you have arrived here.”

“Four hours.....”

She had lost consciousness for longer than she had expected.

Even though, she had stepped onto the battle field since she was 15 years old, this was the first time she had experienced being cornered to this degree.

The soldier spoke.

“Ah, your companions is unharmed. They should be receiving treatment at the infirmary.”

“I see. Thank you. Could you lead me to them?”

“Yes.”

Arrieta followed the soldier towards the infirmary.

The infirmary was very busy. There were a lot of wounded people and the healers were busily moving around.

Even the haggard looking Rick was helping out.

“Medical officer Rick.”

“Princess!”

Rick ran toward her with wide eyes when he saw her.

Suddenly, the surrounding people stirred. They had all stopped

breathing, and they were all looking at her.

Arrieta didn't concern herself with the gazes, and she queried.

“How's your body?”

“Fine. Thanks to you.”

He had suffered from the load put on him from the Instantaneous Movement method, and he was transported while being slung around her. It had caused him to have motion sickness, and he had thrown up everything inside him.... After arriving here, he had thrown up again. He was a mess, but he didn't have to tell her that. She had brought him with her while putting her neck on the line. Wasn't he alive because of her?

“While princess had lost consciousness, the survivors from the ruin excavation site was found by the search party. After one after another was found, they joined this place. Suddenly, there were a lot of injured people, so it is a bit hectic.”

“I see. Where is Enora?”

“She is laying down over there.”

Rick guided her toward Enora's bed. Enora had various bandages around her body. After spotting Arrieta, she stood up in surprise.

“Princess.... Ouch.”

However, Enora soon grabbed her head, and she stumbled. Arrieta spoke while helping her.

“Lie down. You’ve gone through a lot of hardship.”

“Ooh-hook(TLN: sobbing noise), Princess....”

Enora was about to cry. The events leading up to coming here was too harsh for a 13 year old girl to withstand. Arrieta smiled gently, and she wiped away the tears. Enora made a face as if the world was about to end.

“Ahhhhhhh, you shouldn’t. Princess. You shouldn’t do this. This is too much....”

“...huh?”

“Princess is going around in such a dishevelled state. Ahhhh. If this becomes known then the head maid will murder me!”

“.....”

Was this the reason why she was about to cry? Arrieta was taken aback so she stared at her dumbly.

“How can you be so indifferent, Mr. Soldier! I shouldn’t have have left her even when the men folk said they’ll take care of the princess.. Hook-hook.(TLN: crying noise, sob)”

“M, Mister.....” (TLN: the term used is Ah-juh-shi – it refers to older men usually married. Usually men passed their prime )

“I’m only 19! I’ve haven’t even had a girlfriend yet....!”

The ‘Mr. Soldiers’ from the surrounding heard her words, and they stared at her as if they had been wounded.

Arrieta felt embarrassed so she avoided their gazes. Sure enough, Arrieta’s appearance was shabby. After she had escaped the ruin excavation site, she had fought while traveling through the forest for a whole day. How could she be clean? Her hair was tangled, and her face was covered in dirt. Even her coat was dirty.

‘I guess it can’t be helped since it’s the battle field?’

She had stepped on the the battle field at the age of 15, so she didn’t have much interest in being a neat freak. She grew up being educated this way since her childhood.

Arrieta spoke with sigh in her voice.

“Enora. Let us put that problem to the side... First, go get some rest.”

“But, princess.”

“I’m capable of washing my face, and brushing my hair. If that doesn’t satisfy you, you can quickly recover and serve me.”

After saying this, Arrieta forced Enora to lie down. She had no choice but to follow suit.

At that moment, Rick gave a fake cough behind her back.

“Hmmm. Princess. Well.....”

“Mmm. I’m sorry. I showed you an unsightly appearance.”

“No, you haven’t. Actually, I have one thing I have to speak to you about....”

“What is it?”

“It’s about Azell.”

“Ah, what happened to him? Did he return safely?”

As a matter of fact, she had thought about asking about Azell. She had left words to the search party. Did he safely join up with them?

“That is.....”

Rick hesitated. Arrieta’s heart skipped a beat. (TLN: her heart throbbed should be correct, but I kind of like ‘skipped a beat’)

‘Don’t tell me he got eaten by the dragon?’

She had no idea what the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was. However, it was a fact that he had challenged the dragon by himself.

Could he win against a dragon by himself? Rather, was it possible for him to survive and escape?

She was flooded with all kinds of ominous thoughts when Rick spoke.

“Mmmm. You just woke up so you must still be tired. I apologize but.... Could you go see the commander, and vouch for Azell’s character?”

“What?”

Arrieta eyes became round when she was given an unexpected request.

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“Oh, Princess. You arrived safely. I’m happy to see you again.”



Beyond the bars, Azell was smiling brightly and waving his hand while wearing a heavy chain with handcuffs on his two arms.

“.....”

After seeing him, Arrieta couldn't think of anything to say.

The clothes Azell was wearing was tattered, and his whole body was covered in dirt. He looked like he had worked in a forced labor camp for a couple month. However, she couldn't see any wounds and he seemed to have quite a lot of energy.

Arrieta queried.

“What happened?”

“The search party located me. Didn't they tell you what they saw?”

“I heard, but.....”

The search party found the part of the forest, which was overturned, as if a storm had swept through. Also, they found the Earth Dragon's dead body, which had died after losing massive amount of blood, and Azell was meditating in front of it. When they asked what had happened, Azell told them that another dragon showed up while he was running away from the Earth Dragon. He

testified that the other dragon appeared and killed the Earth Dragon.

“Did the other dragon really show up?”

“Maybe I saw a phantom since I was terrified. However, if that hadn’t happened then who could have killed the dreadful dragon?”

“Mmmm.”

Arrieta was immediately aware that Azell was lying, but she didn’t question him any further.

Instead, she spoke to the knight who had accompanied her.

“This person is Azell Zestringer. He travelled with me. He has helped me in lots of way while coming here so release him. Also, treat him well.”

“Understood.”

The knight immediately opened the prison cell door, and he released Azell from the handcuffs, which was imprisoning him.

There was a simple reason why Azell was locked up inside a cell. The ruin excavation site was attacked by an unknown horde, and numerous people were killed, so it was a situation where they couldn’t easily trust an unknown person.

They had located Azell's whereabouts, but Arrieta had to wake up and confirm whether he was the real Azell or not. Rick testified for him, but Arrieta was the one who had initially asked for Azell. Therefore, it couldn't be helped.

Arrieta spoke.

"I'll have to apologize."

"No. I understand that the army is an organization that could only be run this way. Aside from being imprisoned, nothing bad happened to me."

Azell spoke in an easy going manner.

Truthfully, the Western Border guard hadn't done anything harsh to him. They had imprisoned him because the situation was too dangerous, and his identity was in question.

The restraints might have been an overkill, but they took this measure when the scouting party's knights and magicians identified him as a Spirit Order practitioner. If they let a person with superhuman strength move around freely then they could suffer great damage if he has evil intention in his heart....

"I'll take steps to get you clean clothes after you wash yourself."

“Thank you.”

“I’ll listen to your story afterward. Moreover, Rick expect to hear from you so show your face to him.”

“Yes.”

After parting from Arrieta, Azell followed the low ranking soldier, who was called over by the knight, to the bathing house.

It would have been problematic if it was winter, but he could wash his body without conserving water in this season.

“Hoo-ooh, this is great.”

Azell was immersed inside a bathtub made out of stone, and he sighed languidly. In the current season, it would have been normal for him to tremble from cold when immersing his body in cold water. However, his face became red as if he had entered a sauna.

Truthfully, his surrounding started to steam. It was the magical effect of Spirit Order. Steam started rising up and his skin took on a rosy color.

After he washed his body for a long time, Azell stepped out, while having a refreshed look.

“Hmmm. Should I cut my beard?”

After hearing Arrieta say that he looked like 40 year old man, he had decided he must cut his beard. Unfortunately, he didn't have a razor.

## Chapter 24 - The 220 Year Gap (2)

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“Well, I can do this.”

For an advance Spirit Order Practitioner, a shaving knife was merely a decoration. While looking at his face on the surface of the water, he swept his hand across his chin once. This caused all the dirty beard he was growing to fall off cleanly.

If the soldiers saw this then they would have been jealous of this method. After he finished shaving, he dried himself with a towel and he put on the neatly folded clothes. Then he swept his hair back and tied it off. He looked halfway decent now.

After he had taken a bath and put on decent clothes, he looked entirely different from his previous state. His hair was crimson as if it was burning, and he looked like a splendid young man with blue eyes.

“I have to quickly grow my muscles.”

Azell looked at reflection of his body on the surface of the water, and he started posing to accentuate his muscles. However, the definition had yet to emerge.

‘I would have never thought it would be this difficult.’

Before he went in hibernation, his body was perfectly trained like a marble statue. However, it was a body made from training long

hours since his childhood. Therefore, Azell wasn't sure whether he could create his muscles in a short amount of time. Now that he had tried it, it wasn't as easy as he thought. He was able to bulk up his body, but it required a lot of time to shape the muscles to his liking.

“Well, there is no such thing as easy work in this world.”

While grumbling, he went to look for the infirmary, and Rick was surprised.

“Are you really Azell?”

“I am. You don't have to emphasize it.”

“You look like an entirely different person. If it wasn't for the color of your hair, I wouldn't have recognized you.”

Azell's hair was red as if it was burning, and it was very eye-catching. His hair was very fragile when he first woke up, but now his hair was very lustrous. It looked good.

Suddenly, Azell asked a question.

“I'm glad everyone arrived safely. Do you know what happened to Sir Giles by any chance?”

“Sir Giles arrived not too long ago and he is resting. He arrived

after recovering a lot of his men.”

“That’s fortunate.”

Azell sighted in relief.

Suddenly, Rick lowered his voiced and asked a question.

“So, Azell, what really happened?”

When Azell requested the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, Rick had already fainted. Afterwards, he wasn’t able to hear a good explanation from Arrieta. Also, he had heard various stories from the scouting party, who had returned, and he had a hard time believing most of it.

Azell spoke.

“It is as you have heard. The bastards called the Dragon’s Shadow used some method to involve a dragon to capture the princess. I don’t know if it held a grudge or if there was another reason, but another dragon showed up. The dragons warred against each other. That’s what happened.”

“From one to ten(TLN: this is a direct translation, its like saying “From start to finish”), it sounds like lies, but I experienced all of that....”



“Isn’t that how the world works? You can boast about it later.”

Azell patted Rick’s shoulder.

---

“Wah, you look much younger than I thought?”

Enora’s eyes became round as she talked. Her reaction made Azell laugh bitterly, and he queried.

“What did you think my age was previously?”

“About 40 years old?”

“.....”

Arrieta and now Enora said the same thing so his previous appearance must have made him look really old. Azell promised himself that he’ll never grow his beard ever again.

Azell queried.

“Anyways, isn’t it too early for you to get up and move around, little lady?”

Enora was neatly wearing her maid outfit, while she still had

bandages on. Since she had already come to call on him, she must be back to doing her work.

‘She is a little lady, but she has a keen sense of professionalism. Jeez.’

While he was admiring her, Enora glared at Azell, while she had her hands on her hips.

“Well, it might not look that way, but I’m serving as the royal maid as the daughter of the highly regarded Balray family. Therefore, you can’t just call me that.”

“Ughh, come to think of it....”

Unless there is a special reason, one doesn’t serve as a maid for the royal family. One has to at the very least be a daughter from a noble’s family. He guessed that part hadn’t changed even in this time period.

Enora saw Azell’s expression starting to crumple so Enora feigned generosity as she spoke.

“I guess i can forgive you since you saved me. However, you can’t call me little lady.”

“May I call you Miss Enora?”

“I’ll allow that much.”

“Oh my, pardon my bad manners. Miss Enora.”

“It’s fine if you realize it. You look pretty good after you washed and shaved your beard. How about paying attention to your hair?”

“My hair?”

“Yes. It is very shaggy, so it doesn’t look very good. Please cut it.”

“Is that right?”

Azell scratched his head as if he was embarrassed. Enora spoke.

“Please put aside some time later.”

“Huh?”

“I’ll specially cut your hair.”

When she saw Azell only blink his eyes, Enora thumped her chest with pride.

“Appearances aside, I groom princess’ hair. For a guy like uncle, you won’t ever experience a service like this in your life time. So you should feel honored.”

“Wow, I’m really honored? Still, I don’t think you should call me uncle....”

“How old are you?”

“Mmmm. I’m about 26 years old?”

“Then you are an uncle.”

“.....”

Certainly, it was correct for a 12 year old girl to consider a 26 year old an uncle. However, he couldn’t help but be wounded.

“Anyways, princess is waiting for us so please follow me.”

‘I haven’t even married, yet I’m being called an uncle....’

Azell followed Enora, while he complained inside.

He arrived at Arrieta’s room and unlike the time he saw her in prison, she looked clean. Enora had groomed her, so she had a princess-like appearance.

“I’m sorry it took this long to call you. I was thinking about having dinner with you, but the commander invited me.”

“It’s fortunate that I wasn’t called to attend.”

“The commander wanted to, but I stopped him. I guess I made the right choice.”

Arrieta laughed playfully, and she offered Azell a place to sit. Then she stared at Azell’s face.

There were no words being spoken. Azell felt awkward, so he cleared his throat.

“Is there something on my face?”

“No. I’m just surprise that you are younger than I thought.”

“Didn’t I tell you before? I’m 26 years old.”

“Still, you didn’t look like it. Now I can believe those words.”

Soon, Enora prepared the tea. Arrieta spoke when she saw Azell bring the tea cup to his mouth.

“I was right to think that you are a noble.”

“Yes?”

“Your etiquette in drinking the tea looks very natural. One wouldn’t be able to do that if one wasn’t properly educated.” (TLN: maybe he had his pinky up 😊 )

“Is that right?”

Azell calmly tilted his head. However, he felt startled inside.

When he was young, he was an orphan with an unknown origin, but after becoming the hero of the Dragon Demon War, he became a member of the noble society.

Therefore, he worked hard on his manners. He put in a lot of effort as much as he put into learning swordsmanship. This was revealed in the way he drank his tea, and the minor ways he conducted himself.

‘I didn’t realize it would be this difficult.’

He would rather disguise his swordsmanship since he could absolutely conceal it. Azell had learned various styles of swordsmanship, so he was able to easily disguise his real style.

However, it was hard to conceal one’s conduct. He had to work hard at learning his manners, so he didn’t really know any other way to drink his tea.

Arrieta spoke while having a dubious expression.

“Except... Something is a bit weird.”

“Which part are you talking about?”

“The manner in which you drink your tea evokes a sense of antiquity.”

“Really?”

“The etiquette may be from a regional area or a foreign country.... However, it feels similar to the etiquette of the Nadick Kingdom I learned when I was a child.”

“.....”

Azell continued to break out in cold sweat inside. This was something he hadn't thought of. After 220 years had passed, the language itself hadn't changed, but the vocabulary that filled the language had changed. The words Azell had used in his time had changed a bit or entirely new words had cropped up. Azell was quick at picking things up and he was pretty quick on the uptake. He used the Spirit Order technique on regular people, and he used it to fill in the gap within the language using telepathy.

However, the change in etiquette was a complete blind spot for him. The noble society's made it a point to differentiate themselves from the common people through their speech and movement. Depending on the region and the time period, it was inevitable for

it to change. After the Nadick empire collapsed, seven kingdoms emerged and now Azell's etiquette could only be seen as disparate.

‘I guess it was fortunate that I didn't act like a noble?’

The nobles were particular about their speech and conduct, but they did not force it on the common people. The manners of a noble was something that differentiated them from the common people.

Therefore, the current basic etiquette on treating someone above your station was similar to before. Since Azell was a common person, there weren't any problem stemming from the way he treated Arrieta. If he acted like a noble then he would have been put in an awkward situation.

Fortunately, Arrieta didn't dig any deeper into that subject.

“Hmm. I guess your memories haven't recover.”

“Yes.”

“It is unfortunate.”

Arrieta made a faint smile. It was obvious to her that Azell had a secret that he had a hard time talking about. His actions were too absurd for her to continuously believe his lies.



However, Arrieta decided to bury it. Azell was her benefactor, and he was a figure she wanted to trust in.

‘I want to trust him?’

Arrieta was surprised at her own thoughts. Has she every thought of someone this way?

‘He really is a strange man.’

She had met many people living as the Dragon Demon Princess. There were people who admired her, feared her, been jealous of her or hated her.

However, it was the first time meeting someone like Azell. The way he looked at her was unfamiliar yet comfortable. In spite of herself, she wanted to tell him the stories she had buried inside.

Arrieta spoke.

“Do you perhaps have anything you want? You have helped me, so I want to give you some kind of reward.”

“Mmmm. Let me see.”

Azell thought about it briefly then he spoke.

“I want a small travel expense and a status card that’ll allow me to freely travel around this country. Also, do you think I could also ask for a sword?”

“Is that it?”

Arrieta was taken aback.

It was none other than the Dragon Demon Princess telling him that she’ll reward him. However, he only wanted this much.

Azell spoke.

“That will be enough. From the outset, I didn’t plan on doing what I did to get a reward.”

“You have a talent for constantly surprising me.”

## Chapter 25 - The 220 Year Gap (3)

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Arrieta laughed from genuine pleasure. He wasn't being greedy nor was he being indecisive from intimidation. He boldly demanded just that amount.

"I'll send for what you want. Also, do have any thoughts of becoming a knight?"

"A knight?"

"If you want, I could appoint you as my knight. I haven't appointed anyone, so I still have the right to do so. You won't be disappointed by my treatment."

It was an unprecedented offer. If one was appointed as a knight by the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta then one would immediately become a royal knight. No one would be able to ignore him with that status.

However, Azell shook his head from side to side.

"It is a humbling offer, but I'll have to refuse."

"Could you tell me why?"

"I myself don't know the reason."

“Is it because of your lost memories?”

“Yes.”

Truthfully, he didn't want to tie himself to the throne. He didn't know in which ways the world had changed. Also, he didn't know the state of affairs of the continent. The fact that he would be able to establish his identity was appealing, but currently, he wanted to travel around the world freely.

‘First, I have no idea which country Marquis Karzark is associated with.’

Before Azell fell asleep, he was a bachelor. Since he was a war-time orphan, he didn't have any relatives either. Therefore, it was normal for the succession of his position as Marquis Karzark to end without it passing onto the future generation.

However, Azell did have children. His children weren't related to him by blood. During the war, he had adopted the children he had formed connection with. Moreover, he asked Carlos to become their godfather. He asked Carlos to supervise his inheritance.

“Did my line end? If it continued then I'll have to look for them.’

He had many things he had to find out.

Arrieta revealed a sense of regret.

“If that is your wish, it is unfortunate. However, could you listen to my request?”

“What is your request?”

“I’ll stay here for 4 days before I return to the royal palace. I would like you to accompany me.”

“You want me to?”

“Yes. Originally, the Western Frontier guards wasn’t staffed with a large number of soldiers. Moreover, they just suffered a huge loss.”

“Mmm.”

There were a lot of casualties at the ruin excavation site. A lot of innocent soldiers, and workers had died...

“This is why it’ll be a problematic if I transfer too many troops to my escort party. The commander wants to give me a lot, but I asked him to give me the minimum number of troops needed.”

“Therefore, you want me to follow princess as an escort.”

“Yes. I want to hire you as an escort for a period of time, and you will be amply paid.”

“I understand. I accept.”

Azell had no reason to turn down this offer. He had no idea how much the world had changed in the past 220 years, and it would be better to travel with someone who could vouch for his identity. It would be better than travelling alone.

‘Also, the bastards called the Dragon’s shadow worries me...’

It would be annoying if they targeted Arrieta again. However, he had found out that they were worshipers of the Dragon Demon King, so he wanted to clash against them again to learn more about them.

‘Atein.....’

Azell thought about Atein’s final moment when Atein was about to die in front of him.

‘You will die with me.’

Atein used his dying self as sacrifice to put a curse on Azell.

Maybe the reason why he woke up in this time period and the fact that his curse had disappeared wasn’t because of the sleep that mimicked the hibernation of a dragon....

‘Maybe it was because of his revival.’

He somehow felt that this was the reason.

Then this situation was beyond what Atein could have imagined. He had prepared a method for his revival, and he probably assumed Azell would have died during the time he was ‘dead’. After a large amount of time had passed, the fact that Azell had died would not change even if the curse was dissolved through his revival.

‘It won’t turn out as you wish.’

If Atein had resurrected then he’ll defeat him once again. This time he’ll make sure there won’t be any resurrection. Also, if the resurrection of Atein hasn’t been completed yet and it was still ongoing, then he’ll smash the people , who were carrying out this task hidden from the world.

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“Hmmm. The fortress’ library isn’t too bad.”

Next day, Azell had asked Arrieta to give him the authority to be able to peruse the Western Fortress’ library. Of course, this place didn’t have any secret information. It was a library with a collection of books you could buy from the market. The library sounded grand, but it only housed around 100 books. If one really wanted to read books, then one would be better off going to the estate of a noble who had a passion for collecting books.

Azell knew this, so his expectation wasn't that big. Still, he decided to come here even if the variety of books was limited here.

‘It's as I have expected.’

The library mostly held books about martial arts or war tactics. Also, there were books about the history of wars. Azell had wanted to see these books. If he wanted to find out about how the world had changed in the past 220 years, then shouldn't he study the history first?

‘The Nadick empire had completely collapsed. Moreover, the Rulain kingdom was... Mmmm. Duke Rulain really was the founder.’

The Rulain kingdom was established around 140 years ago. The country's land used to be the Southwest region of Azell's homeland, the Nadick empire.

After the Nadick empire fell, the land was divided into 7 kingdoms. Other small kingdoms existed, but these 7 kingdoms pretty much occupied most of continent.

‘After the era of prosperity had ended, I thought some lines would have survived... They completely collapsed.’

After the Nadick empire collapsed, the royal line was terminated. This was why most of the empire's territory was able to be divided



between various countries.

This process wasn't very peaceful. The seven kingdoms fought fiercely to occupy more land, even if it was by a little. After the borders were established, it took around 20 years for the peaceful times to arrive. During these chaotic times, many had died and all seven kingdoms became devastated.

Afterwards, each kingdom waged war with each other. There were winners and losers, but Azell's attention was focused on another part.

‘ The Great Darkness? What is that?’

About 60 years ago, a calamity called the Great Darkness had arrived.

The plague of unknown origin had swept through the entire continent. The plague killed countless numbers of people. It brought the nations to the brink of extermination, so one could tell how serious this matter was.

During this time, the heretics gained a great deal of influence, and madness started to spread.

The civilization itself took a massive step backwards. Many knowledge were lost during all of this including the secrets of the Spirit Order.....

‘Ah, is this the reason why?’

The Spirit Order practitioners and the magicians of this time didn’t know about basic concepts that was considered to be common sense, so he thought it was weird. Moreover, the quality of an average Spirit Order practitioner hadn’t gotten better. As he perused over the history, he started to understand why.

‘Also, the collapse of the church....’

During the Great Darkness, the corruption within the church reached its extreme. They couldn’t cure the fundamental problem of the plague and they only used their healing magic on those with money and power. The secrets of the healing magic was hidden, and the priest of affluent background only got the chance to learn it. They were discriminated based on their station, not their talent.

‘They really fucked up.’

Azell sighed. He felt fortunate that he didn’t awaken in that time frame.

This was when Baion, the man Rick mention, appeared.

He had reproduced the secrets of the healing arts and of course, he was successful in solving the root cause of the plague. Moreover, he decided not to share this with the church.

Instead, he teamed up with the priests who were disgusted by the

half-decayed church and they formed a private healing institution. This in turn brought about the Medical Association. The healers produced by the Medical Association ended the Great Darkness. They had made the greatest contribution in ending the plague, which had persisted for 30 years.

‘The authority of the church came to an end...’

They used the healing arts as a weapon to wield massive amount of power, and they smashed the corrupted church.

Of course, religion did not disappear. Their power became much weaker compared to before, and they lost their influence over politics. Their power was completely seized.

‘Baion was an incredible person.’

Azell felt admiration toward the man name Baion. No matter what his motives were, he was a world-changing hero, who had broken through the despair.

‘Hmmm. Beyond that... I don’t see anything that’s eye-catching.’

If he looked at Rulain Kingdom as the standard, there was an event 30 years ago where an army of monsters called the Grand Dark Alliance appeared inside the Balan forest. These orcs were much stronger than the others and a mutated orc, Daken, was also much smarter. It had united the forces inside the Balan forest to threaten the kingdom.

The Western Border Fortress was established, and a large number of soldiers settled there. This was the main reason why they were so sensitive to the movements inside the Balan forest..

‘Ho-oh. The bastard called Daken must be smart even if he is an orc.’

Azell enjoyed reading the records regarding Daken.

There weren’t any surprises inside the records of the military force. If one was talking about mutations that increased strength, he had seen numerous instances of it happening in the days of the Dragon Demon War.

However, Daken acted like a charismatic human hero. He called his army ‘Grand Dark Alliance’, and he had structured his army like a human army.

‘Hmm. I want to know more about this bastard... There aren’t any detailed records.’

Azell looked through the books, while feeling disappointed.

“So you are here.”

The door of the library opened, and he heard a voice he remembered.

Azell turned to look at him without feeling surprised.

“Sir Giles. I’m glad to see that you are unhurt.”

“I feel the same way.”

Giles looked haggard, but he smiled.

---

Since Giles had come to find him, Azell had no choice but to exit the library. He didn’t come here just to exchange greetings. He had ulterior motive in coming here.

“Any ways, I couldn’t recognize you. Truthfully, I thought it was someone else inside the library.”

“Everyone seems to say the same thing to me.”

Azell laughed bitterly.

Last night after he had met Arrieta, Enora had latched onto him and she trimmed his hair. His unruly hair was arranged in a way that made him look good. If he put on some nice cloth, then he could pass as a heir to a noble family. His appearance looked nice.

‘The little lady has some skill.’

She was young, but she was the princess' exclusive maid. So she had to have some abilities. If she didn't, then Arrieta probably wouldn't have brought her here.

Azell asked while walking in the corridor.

“So the Dragon's corpse should fetch a lot of money?

## Chapter 26 - The 220 Year Gap (4)

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“Yes. Especially the Magician’s Association and the Medical Association will buy it at an expensive price. I heard from the princess that you put your life on the line to distract the dragon, so she could escape?”

“It somehow worked out that way.”

“Everyone is talking about that story. There are a lot of people who want to hear your tale of heroism.”

“Hahaha.”

Azell laughed awkwardly. Truthfully, he did more than just distract the dragon. He had killed it, but he couldn’t say that. He had decided it wasn’t time to reveal everything about himself.

‘Also, I’m too weak to boast about killing a dragon.’

The Dragon Maken, which he was able to use through an arrangement made by Carlos, was the main reason why he was able to defeat the Earth dragon. If he didn’t have the Dragon Maken then he would have been eaten after losing.

However, Azell had earned a lot of things through the fight.

The magical energy from the Dragon Maken had flowed into his

energy pulse, and while it remained there, he was able to absorb it through meditation. Then he was able to take a part of the dragon's strength through the Dragon Slayer's ritual.

This in turn made Azell's body more powerful. A seed of strength that could never be earned through training was planted in Azell's body.

Also, his magical energy had greatly increased. His energy pulse became sturdier, and he had completed dual banding his first Ring of Life. Also, his second Ring of Life was nearly finished.

The fact that he was able to construct the dual banding into reality was a huge accomplishment.

From theory to tests, he had gathered enough evidence that said it would succeed, but he had no idea if it would actually work. He succeeded in constructing an analogous model using animal experimentation, but when using the magical energy on himself, he didn't know what variables might pop up.

However, he had deployed it in practice, and he had now confirmed the theory through the advantages he learned while building the structure.(TLN: structure of the ring)

‘What would have happened if the Dragon Slayer's Ritual didn't happen?’

His magical energy had steeply increased because he had taken



the dragon's power, and the dual band was formed from it. This was his lucky break, but it also left much to be desired.

He had skipped the trial and error process, and he was drunk off the fruit of success.

He knew he should count his blessing and stop complaining. However, in Azell's perspective, he couldn't help but feel a sense of frustration.

‘I was able to gather Dragon Demon magic to that degree....’

When he took the dragon's power, Azell's magical energy slightly took on the properties of Dragon Demon magic. Unlike regular magic, it was able to alter the present surrounding just by emitting it... (TLN:I'm guessing you can make direct changes to the world with Dragon Demon magic)

It was the basis for making the Dragon Maken. However, he still had to travel a long road before he was able to make the Dragon Maken again.

Giles spoke.

“Princess declared that you have the right to receive a certain portion of the compensation from the dragon's corpse. ”

“Ho-oh.”

“Princess wanted to tell you directly about the compensation, so you could look forward to that.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

Azell didn’t really mean what he said.

Giles spoke.

“Also, I heard that you are following the princess back to the capital as an escort.”

“It somehow worked out that way.”

“I guess we’ll spend a good amount of time together. I was also assigned to the troops escorting her.”

“Ah, I guess so.”

“I’ve lost a lot of subordinates, so I’m not too happy being reassigned to this mission.”

“.....”

Azell watched Giles smiling bitterly, so he kept his mouth shut.

When the Dragon's Shadow attacked the ruin excavation site, Gile's unit suffered a major loss. He was able to recover a lot of them, but around 1/3 of his unit was killed.

“However, it is better to be inserted into a military force where I am needed rather than becoming an experienced rookie commander with nothing to do. Let's get along.”

The Western Border guard wasn't able to transfer many troops into Arrieta's escort. Therefore, they decided to reassign people like Giles, whose competence was guaranteed.

Azell replied.

“Please take care of me.”

Soon, they arrived at the location of the dragon's corpse.

However, the sight was much different than what Azell had expected. The dragon's corpse wasn't transported here intact. It was cut and distributed into couple dozen barrels.

‘I guess they couldn't just move the whole thing.’

It would be possible if they used a large cart used to transport large scale of goods. However, one need a well maintained road for it to be a workable solution. If they wanted to bring a dragon's corpse, which was fallen in the middle of a forest, then they had no choice but to hack it into pieces.

Soon, Azell spotted Arietta within the crowd.

“I’ve come at your summons.”

“Mmm. You came.”

“I had no idea a dragon’s corpse could be turned into money.”

In Azell’s time, magicians used various parts of a dragon’s corpse. If the dragon’s blood was processed then one could make magic recovery potion or wound medication. The bones, scales and leather was so tough that it was used as ingredients for weapons or armor.

However, he never thought that it could be exchanged for money.

Arrieta spoke.

“I had know idea either. This is the first time I’ve seen a dead dragon. The scouting party’s magician saw it and he advised us to collect it with haste. We followed his direction, so he brought it here after dismembering it... However, there is one thing that is bothering me.”

“What is it?”

“The dragon’s eyes are missing.”

“The eyes?”

“Both disappeared as if it had been scooped out. Do you have any theory as to why someone would do this?”

“Mmmm. I have no idea.”

Azell shook his head from side to side.

When he defeated the Earth dragon, he hadn’t damage the eyes. However, the eyes had disappeared as if it had been scooped out....

Arrieta lowered her voice and spoke.

“Those bastards might have done it.”

“The probability is high.”

The bastards they were talking about were, of course, the Dragon’s Shadow. A magician would have known the value of a dragon’s corpse. It wasn’t strange that someone had avoided the eyes of the Western Border guards to only dig out the dragon’s eyes.

Arrieta spoke.

“I’ve heard the dragon eyes are sources of powerful magical energy. This is unfortunate.”

“Well, we can do nothing about it. We are fortunate that they weren’t able to get their hands on the heart.”

“I guess so. I heard the heart was entirely ripped apart....”

“It’s possible since it had fought against another dragon.”

“Is that so?”

Arrieta smiled at Azell, who was obviously lying. It was a smile of an accomplice that shared the same secret.

---

Regina was a follower who had a relatively high position in the secret organization called the ‘Dragon’s Shadow. However, she couldn’t be compare to the member that was considered to be the back bone of the organization.

“I see. You failed.”

The woman who spoke held a high position that couldn’t even be compared to Regina.

She had long black hair and dark brown eyes. She looked to be in her late 20s and she was a cold beauty.

She didn't look like a Dragon Demon. She looked like a pure human, but Regina knew she had changed her original appearance through magic.

She spoke.

“You lost a lot of your comrades.”

“I'm sorry.”

“You don't really look like you are sorry. For a mere job of kidnapping the Dragon Demon Princess, you mobilized that much manpower yet you failed. Do you have any excuse? There probably won't be a better opportunity to kidnap her.”

When she thought of the powerful Dragon Demon princess Arietta, she thought it was ridiculous to use the expression 'mere'.

However, the manpower she had rounded up would have been enough to finish the job. There were 4 Dragon Demon and two high level human mages. It was true that Arrieta was powerful, but if one assessed her power, three of the members deployed could have overpowered her.

Nevertheless, Regina had failed. However, she had an excuse.

“There was an unexpected disrupter.”

Regina gave a detailed report about Azell.

At first, the black haired lady listened apathetically, but her complexion turned serious mid-report when Regina mentioned a certain event.

“Wait. Did you just say Dragon Slayer’s ritual?”

“Yes? Yes, I did.”

“Did that man really say it was the Dragon Slayer’s ritual?”

“I’m sure of it.”

“Can you guarantee it with your life on the line?”

A cold energy assaulted her senses. Her murderous intent made one hard to breath. Regina spoke, while she gulped.

“Yes.”

“This isn’t something we can dismiss.”



The black haired lady mumbled seriously. Regina carefully asked a question.

“May I ask what this Dragon Slayer’s ritual is?”

“You may not.”

“.....”

“It is a level of information you aren’t allowed to know. First, carefully tell me what you had seen and heard. ”

At those words, Regina carefully told her the rest of the story.

Azell had requested the Dragon Slayer’s ritual, and the Earth dragon had accepted. Then they started to fight.

When she went back afterwards, the Earth dragon had already died.

“The Western Border guards were mobilized, so I was only able to bring this.”

Regina brought out two red globes, and it was as big as a small child’s body.

It was the dragon eyes. As Arrieta had guessed, Regina had dug

the dragon eyes out, while she avoided detection from the Western Border guards.

The black haired lady held it up in her hands. Then the two dragon eyes started floating into the air.

“There was a person who knew about the Dragon Slayer’s ritual, and he also killed a dragon....”

“I have no idea if that man killed it. It is true that he possessed frightening skills, but it is hard to see him being able to fight one-on-one against a dragon. Moreover, if one considers the storm that occurred there, I think another dragon intruded...”

“That is impossible.”

Regina gave a logical deduction, but the black haired lady flatly denied it. She spoke while she carefully observed the dragon eyes.

“There is no way such an event would have occurred if the Dragon Slayer’s ritual was being held. Moreover, the proof is in the dragon eyes.”

“Yes? How....”

“There isn’t even twenty percent of original magical energy left inside the eyes.”

The eyes of a dragon was a powerful source of magical energy. After the heart, it had the most magical energy within a dragon's body.

However, Azell had stolen the essence of power from the dead Earth dragon through the Dragon Slayer's ritual. Therefore, most of the power a dragon's eyes usually held was mostly gone.

Since Regina had never killed a dragon, she wasn't aware of this fact. She just assumed the dragon eyes held powerful magical energy. However, the black haired lady immediately saw through to the truth. She spoke.

"You should use this."

"Yes? But..."

"It is your reward."

Regina became confused at those words. She had failed in her mission and she had lost valuable manpower. She had thought she would be punished. To minimize it, she had told the lady about Azell and she also gave her the dragon eyes.

Instead, she received a reward?

However, the black haired lady didn't elaborate any further.

“Hoo hoo. Azell Zestringer.”

For those who worship the Dragon Demon King, it was an unbearably ill-omened name. When they ran across anyone with the name Azell, they killed them all no matter if they were young or old.

“It is a name with a lot of sin. This is interesting. I’ll have to see him at least once.”

The black haired lady wore a cold smile and she started walking into the darkness.

# Chapter 27 - Raised Social Status (1)

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He had a dream.

It was a dream about the distant past.

However, his dream was vivid as if it had happened not too long ago. It was that kind of dream.

‘This must be a dream.’

Azell dumbly thought to himself.

He was familiar with having a lucid dream. A normal person would question how this was possible. However, Spirit Order practitioners learn how to control the mind, so he had experienced a lot of lucid dreams until he was sick of it. If he wanted to, it was possible for him to induce a lucid dream.

However, this dream had nothing to do with his intent.

In the dream, Azell was with someone within the ruins of a castle. At one time, the castle had boasted to be the most majestic in the world.

This was the castle where the Dragon Demon King Atein had presided.

“There aren’t any useful things left here.”

He heard an apologetic voice. When he looked to his side, Carlos was there.

Azell was accustomed to his looks. He was a youthful magician with tidy brown hair, and cold gray eyes.

‘Those hairs will disappear in a couple decades, and his head will be smooth.’

Those thoughts were the first thing that came into his mind. However, he couldn’t help it since the aged Carlos’ look was too shocking.

Carlos had no idea what Azell was thinking, and he started to sigh.

“That damn bastard Atein didn’t leave anything behind in his research lab even though he is a magician.”

Carlos had used every means imaginable to find a way to dispel the curse put on Azell by Atein. They had searched this castle a couple dozen times to find even a minor clue.

However, it was fruitless. Atein’s extensive collection of magical tomes didn’t have any clues on how to release Azell from the curse. The lab had a surprising amount of magical products, but it didn’t have anything of interest.

Azell consoled his friend.

“Atein may be the very first magician. It is to be expected that he would be different from other magicians.”

The Dragon Demon race created the skill called magic.

Moreover, Atein was the first of the Dragon Demon race to be born into this world, and he reigned over them as king. This was why some magicians hypothesized that Atein was the progenitor of magic.

Carlos became angry.

“Don’t talk about it as if it is someone else’s business! It is a problem with your life on the line!”

“I know that.”

“If you know that then why are you so calm?”

“I can’t be mad at someone who I know is trying the hardest in this world to solve my problem. ”

“Kook....” (TLN: just a sound he made)

Carlos' face reddened. He was embarrassed. Azell was dignified when facing the threat of death, yet he was the one who had lost it.

‘I’m scared too, Carlos.’

The current Azell smiled bitterly when he saw the scene inside his dream.

Yes. Azell was also afraid. He had saved the world, but his future couldn't be saved. Death was approaching closer by the hour, and he might succumb to it. Truthfully, he had been afraid and he wanted to cry.

He preferred the idea of dying in battle, where he would die when he lost. He would be able to stay indifferent until that single moment would come. It was harder to bear the suffocating fear of a death that was slowly approaching him.

However, he felt a fire burn in the corner of his heart when he thought this.

‘Atein. The only thing you could take away from me was my life.’

Azell was determined to not let him have his(TLN:Atein) own way.

Above all, he didn't want to disappoint his friend who was desperately working for him. Even if his efforts were a failure, he never wanted his friend to see him in a dishevelled state. He



wanted to show a confident and proud figure until the end.

It was all for show and it was a childish behavior. However, as a man who had charged into battle while grasping his sword, what would be left if one took away his bravado?

He kept up this facade with his life on the line, so no one would disparage him.

If he thought back on it, he thought the bravado definitely helped Carlos.

“Azell, I really... It feels like we have switched places.”

“I feel the same. I would have never imagined this day would come.”

It was the opposite in the Dragon Demon war. Azell was still inexperienced, and whenever he couldn't hold back his emotions, Carlos's cool attitude acted as the cold water that doused him.

Whenever the group was tired or desperate, he was the one person who didn't falter. In the moment when everyone faltered, he withstood everything like a steel beam. He was their support.

Carlos was a man who had taken on this role. However, after Azell was cursed, their roles had been reversed. Azell should be the one in greatest agony, but he put up a front. He acted as if he wasn't shaken. He had to become the supporting pillar for Carlos,

who at times, was about to fall apart from despair.

As the two passed through the ruins, they finally reached Atein's office. There were words carved into the half broken wall with magic.

‘The one who treats the world with hate must be prepared to be hated by the world.’

The moment Azell read those words he could guess who had written it.

Dragon Demon King Atein.

He had tried to conquer the world yet did he understand the significance of his action?

Carlos asked a question.

“What was the Dragon Demon King's thinking when he tried to conquer the world?”

The Dragon Demon race was born far back in the past. The very first of the Dragon Demon race, Atein, was a special existence. He had a much longer life span compared to the others of the Dragon Demon race. He had lived for more than a thousand years.

He was the seed that started the Dragon Demon race. He might

also be the progenitor of the mysteries called magic. Why did he join up with the others of his race to conquer the world? Countless number of people had put their life on the line to fight Atein, but no one knew Atein's real intention, which he held within his heart.

Azell was the one exception.

Inside Azell's mind, Atein's words brushed by.

‘Unfortunately, this experiment was a failure. I’m still ignorant. I have no choice but to accept this truth.’

These words made Azell shiver.

If Atein had revealed his ambitions, then he(TLN: Azell) would have snorted.

He would have laughed it off if Atein like a typical magician gave a long-winded speech regarding his delusions of grandeur. However, when he was about to face his death, Atein boldly accepted his failure. Moreover, he said that the chaotic events that turned the world upside was merely an experiment

‘Azell. If you are the sword the world had aimed at me then I’ll break you using my life as the price. You and I will die together.’

...after he said those words, the curse came down on Azell.

Azell spoke after he briefly thought about the past.

“Carlos.”

“Huh?”

“You, your head will lose all its hair.”

“...what?”

The past had already happened, but he never had this conversation. That difference destroyed the dream world.

Azell continued to speak as the world inside his dream crumbled.

“However, Carlos, you are one hell of a man. You deserve to be called an Archmage.”

This was the praise Azell wanted to give wholeheartedly to his friend, who was long gone.

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While the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta stayed in the Western Border Fortress, Azell trained his body and Spirit Order. He also spent the time peacefully reading the sparse number of books in the library.

Giles spoke.

“Your magical energy has increased considerably within the past few days?”

“First, I’m not trying to train my magical pulse by expanding my magical energy. My progress is faster since I am trying to recover what I have lost.”

Azell’s words were half truths.

In just 4 days of training, he had absorbed a considerable amount of power from the Dragon Slayer’s ritual, and he was able to finish making his 2nd Ring of Life. His magical energy had increased several magnitudes since he had left the ruin site.

Since his magical energy had increased, it meant Azell could use his technique more easily now. The power he could release and the amount of magical energy accumulated inside his body was much larger. He could overwhelm Giles now if they sparred.

However, Azell didn’t reveal his cultivation, so he let Giles win. He decided he would be careful. He didn’t want his action to be too preposterous.

After he spent the four days this way, Arrieta decided to leave the Western Border Fortress to head towards the palace.

Azell woke up early on the morning they would depart towards

the palace. He mediated once and he lightly stretched his body. Then he put on the equipment he was given the previous day. Azell told the Dragon Princess that he only need one sword, but since he was guarding her, she insisted on giving him a leather armor.

“Hmm. It has been awhile.”

Before he fell asleep, Azell was a prestigious knight so he used to wear a full-body armor enchanted with magic.

Prior to one becoming a knight and earning a title of nobility, most soldiers lived with having poor equipments. The leather armor was new and of good quality since it was from the military supply, but it made him think of those time.(TLN: remind him of when he was a low ranked soldier)

After he finished arming himself, Azell headed toward the infirmary before he went to the designated location.

“Yo.”

He gave a greeting. Rick had woken up early to get ready for his daily work.

“You are leaving today?”

“Yes. I owe you a lot, Rick.”

“I think you have already paid back enough of what was owed me.”

Rick put out his hand, and Azell clasped it. Then they shared a fierce handshake.

Rick spoke.

“If you earn a promotion while serving the princess then don’t forget about me.”

“Then I don’t think I’ll ever return?”

“I would do the same.”

Rick smirked, while he spoke.

“I hope you recover your memories. I’m sure you, Azell, aren’t of common birth.”

“Thank you.”

Azell shared goodbyes with Rick and he headed toward the designated location. No one was there yet, but Giles and another person soon showed up.

The other man looked to be a young knight, and he was of similar

age as Azell.

Azell gave his greetings.

“Good morning, Sir Giles.”

“You are early.”

Azell had come 20 minutes before the appointed time. He decided it wouldn't do him any good to show up later than the others. However, no one was there when he arrived. Giles had arrived afterwards, but he was an exception.

Giles introduced the young knight he had arrived with.

“This is Sir Boar. He is a member of the escort group, who had traveled here with the princess. Sir Boar, this is....”

“I've heard of him. He was lucky enough to escape with his life thanks to the princess.”

“...what?”

Giles stared back at him, while being taken aback.

The young knight named Boar had tidy brown hair, and he possessed blue eyes. He gave off an impression of being an arrogant



young noble. He had a condescending expression on his face, which reinforced this impression.

“The princess can’t be helped. I have know idea what her intention are. I don’t get why she would bring a man of unknown origin into the escort party, when she already has competent knights. Any ways, you better not get in our way. Just stay quiet.

“.....”

At that moment, Azell was flabbergasted. He blanked out for a moment, but he suddenly had a thought.

“Should I beat up this bastard?”

Before he fell asleep, after he became the Duke Karzark, there weren’t that many people that had big enough balls to be this rude towards him. (TLN: the original translation is big liver=> big balls, I changed it b/c it sounded better :P)

Before the Dragon Demon war ended, there were some who were like that, but they all came to regret it in the end.

Azell was trying to suppress his rising violent impulses when Boar spoke as if he had remembered something. He looked towards Azell.

“Well, now that I think about it, we don’t have that many members. I guess we need a guy to be an errand boy.”

“Sir Boar, your words are too harsh.”

“Mmm? What about my words?”

When Giles butted in, Boar acted as if there was something wrong with him. His expression indicated that he genuinely didn't see what the problem was with his words. Giles was momentarily speechless when he saw the other's attitude. However, soon he put on a determined expression then he spoke.

## Chapter 28 - Raised Social Status (2)

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“Azell performed a great meritorious deed by safely bringing the princess here. Are you going to ignore what the princess said?”

“How could her words be true? Sir Giles, you don’t know about this, but the princess is excessively lenient towards her underlings. Moreover, if she had faced an enemy that could threaten her, how could a man with an unknown background be able to perform such meritorious deed? Would that make any sense?”

“.....”

“Also, doesn’t he look weak? How could he help the princess with such a frail body?”

Azell’s body didn’t have much muscles yet. Of course, his body was frail compared to a thoroughly trained knight.

Even if that was true, Boar’s every word had the power of being able to provoke a person. Azell suddenly poured too much strength into his fist, and it almost creaked aloud. However, he was barely able to hold himself back.

‘This bastard’s personality is really in the sewers. Ah, should I really just beat him up? Should I wait until the princess comes, and ask her to knight me then beat him up?’

Currently, Azell controlled the energy he emitted outward, so he

evoked an atmosphere of familiarity without any pressure. However, it didn't matter what kind of impression Azell had possessed, the other had dismissed him at first glance. Azell's effort was all for naught since his opponent didn't bother to see what kind of person he was. He(TLN: Boar) was armed with a firm prejudice. (TLN: basically Azell used his skill to project a friendly/neutral attitude, but the other guy is too much of an ass to notice it)

Boar mocked him.

“Well, Sir Giles, you probably don't know much about the princess since you are in such a remote region. However, you are also going on a long journey back to the royal palace, so you better engrave my words in your heart.”

He was blatantly looking down on Sir Giles. He must have a high enough position in the royal palace to guard the princess, so Giles must have looked like a backwater country bumpkin to him.

Giles glared at him. Boar's expression looked down on him as if he was daring Giles to say something. The tension between the two was high.

The volatile atmosphere was broken due to Arrieta arriving.

“Everyone has gathered.”

Arrieta and Enora appeared together. Unlike her usual self, she

wore a voluminous hat, and it covered the upper portion of her head and her horns. It also covered her pointy ears. She wore a thick travelling cloak to hid her figure.

Giles and Boars retracted the hostility they were aiming at each other, and they paid their respects to her.

Azell queried in confusion.

“What do mean by everyone?”

“I meant what I said. All the party members have assembled.”

Arrieta answered him. Azell was surprised at those word.

“What? Five people is everyone?”

“Yes.”

“No, how is that...”

Arrieta had asked him to be part of her escort, and Azell had thought there would be additional several dozens of troops that would also follow. Originally, didn't she come here with about twenty soldiers following her?

“My escort party members, the magicians and the scholars will

return at a later date.”

Three from her 30 member party was killed during the ambush by the Dragon’s Shadow. Moreover, there were 11 wounded. Arrieta ignored the objection from all the others, and she decided to take at most only two members. She decided to return to the royal palace in haste.

“Actually, I thought about putting on a disguise, but unfortunately it is impossible.”

“A disguise?”

“My appearance is too eye-catching, so I considered disguising myself with magic. However, after I consulted with the magicians, they did not have any magic that could do that. They said it was impossible for them to cast such magic. It is unfortunate.”

Arrieta was a Dragon Demon, and the Dragon Demon magic resisted outside magic being used on her. Therefore, it was impossible for a middling magician to make changes to her.

Arritea asked a question.

“I tried to dress up so I wouldn’t be too noticeable... How do I look?”

“You look very noticeable.”

“Is that so?”

Arrieta was a little bit depressed when Azell spoke truthfully.

She had insisted on wearing a large fluffy hat, and a cape. In her own way, she tried hard to hide her eye-catching appearance. However, the outfit itself was so ridiculous that it stood out. Even if she hid her horns, ears and the Dragon Demon stone on the back of her hands, her appearance was enough to draw everyone’s eyes to her.

Arrieta let out a sigh.

“Enora was also opposed to it.”

“Well, it’s better than outright revealing oneself.”

“Even if it is a platitude, I’ll thankfully listen to it.”

“Still, isn’t it dangerous to go with such little manpower?”

Arrieta seriously answered Azell’s question.

“Mmm. If I’m being honest... I think it is more dangerous to have middling number of people.”

“I guess that makes sense.”

The statement could be seen as overly dismissive of the escort's military prowess. However, he had fought against the Dragon's Shadow, so he agreed with her. If they had an overwhelming advantage in numbers then he would have no problem with it. However, the 20-30 party members would just make them a bigger target.

Azell queried.

“Is Ms Enora leaving with us?”

“Yes.”

“...is it wise to do so?”

“My thoughts exactly, so I tried to prevent her....”

Arrieta looked at Enora, while sighing. Enora was making a stubborn expression. Arrieta had told Enora in the night that she should stay here, and she should come with the other party.....

‘I can never do that! If I did, then I'll be hit with a bolt of lightning from the head maid! Does princess want to make my body ineligible for marriage?’ (TLN:Enora basically a lady-in-waiting with a decent family background.)



...she had no idea why staying here would affect her marriage prospects. Enora cried and clung to her, so Arrieta had given in.

‘I had no idea this child was so fearless.’

Until now, her other personal maids hadn’t been that courageous. Once she left the palace to go to the battlefield, every personal maid turned pale, and they wanted to quit.

‘It really is as the head maid said. There aren’t anyone else as competent as this child.’

Arietta had been taken aback when the head maid tagged Enora as her personal maid. She was still very young, and it had only been half a year since she had joined the palace maids.

Amongst the palace maids, there were young girls. However, most of them were in charge of doing minor tasks, while they learned the duties of a palace maid. It was normal for a highly trained maid to be assigned to the members of the royal family, who held high stations.

The head maid went against those customs, and she had assigned Enora to Arrieta as a personal maid. She was not only tasked to serve her in the palace, but she was tasked to act as an aid when Arrieta traveled outside.

Her choice was correct. Enora had gone through hardship that couldn’t even be compared to what the previous personal maid had

gone through yet she didn't show any signs of wanting to quit. She wondered how the poet Bairay(TLN:author/poet, but it might be a typo by author) raised his daughter.

Enora queried.

“There is no one here to take care of princess, and I can't send you off with males only. Also...”

She spoke strongly, while looking at the men.

“Don't tell me you don't have any confidence in being able to protect me?”

“Hmm. Does that even need to be said? Relax and follow me. I'll solve any danger we face.”

For a knight following the rules of chivalry, it isn't an exaggeration to say a knight without his pride is basically a corpse. Boar had succeeded in entering the royal knights at a young age, so he was of this mold. After Enora's spoken words had bristled his pride, he immediately pounded his chest, and he boasted.

Azell smiled bitterly.

“What you say has some merit... Mmm. Well, it can't be helped since everything has been decided.”

No matter how one saw it, Enora was a really tough girl. If she had grown up sheltered then she wouldn't be this way. Maybe she had experienced many dangerous situation in her childhood.

Arrieta spoke.

“We are traveling as a small group, so we'll ride the horses instead of the carriage. Enora.”

“Yes.”

“I'm not sure if you can ride a horse....”

“I know how to.”

“Huh?”

“I'm not proficient at it, but I learned it alongside my brother.”

“That is surprising. Impressive.”

Arrieta was surprised. She hadn't expected a 12 year old noble girl, who had come to the palace to work, had learned horsemanship.

“Great. Enora, Azell and I will go pick some horses.”

The three of them immediately went to the fortress' stable. When they were far from Giles and Boar, Arrieta started to speak.

“I’m sorry you had to go through that unpleasantness.”

“You know about it?”

“My ears are unnecessarily sensitive, so I heard it even from a distance.”

Arrieta laughed bitterly. Then she turned to look at Azell.

“Sir Boar was a knight recommended to me by the head of my escort party, who had traveled with me here. I told them I wanted to travel with small party. However, both the commander of this place and the head of the escort begged me to take at least one of their numbers....”

Arrieta wasn't in a situation where she could turn down the request. When she said yes, the commander of Western Border guard picked Giles and the head of escort party chose Boar.

Arrieta spoke.

“I don't know much about Sir Giles, but I've heard Sir Boar is quite skilled.”

“If he wasn't, he would't have been chosen in a situation where

only one person can be sent. He is a Cord Rope master.”

“...how were you able to tell?”

Arietta asked in surprise. Azell smirked.

“He didn’t make much effort to hide it. Well, he’ll be of some help in a battle.”

Azell didn’t like Boar, but he decided to make an assessment in a detached manner. Azell had read him instantly, and by looking at how he controlled his energy, he knew Boar’s skill was up to a decent level.

Arrieta asked a question, while she put on a playful smile.

“How doe he compare to you?”

“Mmm. Do you want a serious answer?”

“Yes.”

“If I fight him in my current condition, I could cut off his head with three strikes.”

“.....”

Azell spoke in a calm voice, and his brutal words made Arrieta hold her breath. Azell saw Enora flinch besides Arietta, and Azell smiled bitterly at his mistake.

“...my language was a bit too excessive. Any ways, I think Sir Boar is completely overlooking me.”

“I understand. Sir Boar has no idea about you, but he was able to get on your nerves?”

“Will he not try hard to get on my nerves from here on out? This was why I thought of something.”

“What is it?”

“I’ll bear it with my eyes closed. After princess knights me, I’ll challenge him to a duel...”

“You’ll shut your eyes and bear being knighted by me... I can’t believe you said it that way. There are many men who dream about that exact situation happening to them.”

“I’m sorry. However, I’m not in a situation where I want to be tied down, so I don’t want to do this. I’ll have to either be patient with him or....”

“Or?”

“I guess I’ll rely on princess’ authority.”

“That doesn’t sound very manly.”

“He seems to come from a decent family. He is acting this way because he trust his background. What can I do? My origin is not known, so I can only fight back using my background as princess’ bodyguard.”

“You spoke truthfully...”

Arrieta was dumbfounded so she laughed.

“I’ve never heard such pathetic word since I’ve been born.(TLN: she is jokingly saying this) I can’t believe you are this bold and shameless.”

“You don’t like it?”

“I’m ok with it. It’s really mystifying.”

Arrieta shook her head and asked a question.

“So should this be your reward for all you have done for me?”

“Huh?”

“You don’t have to be tied down by me. I’m saying I’ll knight you.”

At those words, Azell stared blankly at her for a moment.

If someone from the royal family with the qualification of being a liege appointed a knight then it was par for the course for the person to require the knight to serve only him or her.

However, there were other irregular ways to structure the oath of loyalty made between a liege and his vassal when the knight is appointed. Instead of receiving a fief, it was possible for the knight to receive his rank without taking the oath of loyalty.

These unconventional appointments didn’t exist before the Dragon Demon war. In the past, the knights rode out into battle on a horse so they were invaluable to the cavalry. This was why all the knights had to swear an oath of fealty, and they became nobles after receiving land.

However, during the Dragon Demon war, the young Emperor Haben of the Nadick empire succeeded the old and frail late emperor. He had put forth a radical idea.

He changed how the title of ‘knight’ was interpreted.

One need not be a cavalryman. It didn’t matter if one was a magician or even a Dragon Demon. If one had enough ability, then they could receive the title of knight, and they would be able to



raise their social status. The appointing liege and the appointed knight didn't even need to agree to a oath of fealty.

It was a time where they needed to find additional talents to fight the Dragon Demon race. It was a plan to stop the talented people from being unable to shine because of their backgrounds. They also had in mind of the magicians, who weren't of noble birth, that had left the empire, because of the problem arising from their caste.

This change was quite effective. It especially succeeded in making the magicians, who were wandering around the world, join the battlefield. (TLN: basically you can become a knight if you have the ability. Before you needed a horse + good family background)

'If only Emperor Haben had lived a bit longer, the empire wouldn't have fallen.'

Azell reminisced about the past. The admired young emperor Haben was killed by the Dragon Demon King Atein during the time when Azell started to earn his fame.

However, the act that was meant to change the world was still in place. He thought the world was very mysterious.

After a brief thought, Azell asked a question.

"...aren't you getting the short end of the stick in this deal?"

“Well, it is a power left over(TLN: I think she is implying she can appoint finite number of people-she hasn’t appointed anyone before so she still has the power to do so) since I haven’t used it too much. If anything, don’t you think the price is cheap since you’ve saved my life? This is the time for me to show my vast generosity, and I’m going to invest in you for the future.”

“What if I cut off all my ties from you?”

“Then... Mmm. I’ll be sad.”

Arrieta really tried to make a sad expression. Her speech and attitude was very formal, but her outer appearance was that of a pretty girl. She looked extremely cute.

“Well, well.”

Azell raised both his hands as if he had lost. Was it because she was a young woman, who grew up, being fated to step on to a battlefield? Unlike her outer appearance, she

was formidable.

Eventually, Azell bowed his head.

“I’ll receive it with thanks.”

“I need witnesses for the appointment. Let us head back. I’ll have

Sir Giles and Sir Boar participate in it.”

“That sounds perfectly appropriate.”

While he was nodding his head, he looked at Enora as if he thought of something.

“Ah, Ms Enora.”

“Yes?”

“I’m not a civilian now, but a knight...”

“Is that so? You aren’t one yet.”

“Well, I will be one soon so don’t be so inflexible. So can I call you little miss now?”

Enora furrowed her brows and she asked a question to Arrieta.

“Princess, may I hit this person?”

“In the name of the Dragon Demon Princess, I allow the punishment of the man, who insulted my maid.”

“Then I won’t refuse.”

“Whoa. How scary.”

Azell trembled in an exaggerated manner then he ran away from Enora, who was raising her fist.

## Chapter 29 - Raised Social Status (3)

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“That is why we are here to appoint Azell Zestringer as a knight. Sir Giles and Sir Boar will be the two witnesses.”

“.....”

“.....”

There used to be a rough atmosphere between Giles and Boar, while they had waited, but now they both stared at Azell with dumbfounded expressions. Azell grinned. He stepped forward, and he knelt on one knee in front of Arrieta.

Arrieta unsheathed her white sword, and she spoke as she tapped both his shoulders with it.

“I pronounce this, as the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta Weil Rulain. From this moment on, Azell Zestringer is a knight.”

“...did you omit a lot of stuff?”

“Do you want me to go through a long and annoying formal procedure? I have it all memorized, so I can do it if you want.”

“I’m awed by princess’ progressive mind, which rejects empty formalities.”

Arrieta snorted when Azell quickly changed his attitude. Then she spoke.

“I will hand down the knight’s emblem.”

As she put forth her hand, a white light rose from her palm. The light made a three-dimensional shape of a white eagle, and it started to fly toward Azell.

“Uh?”

Azell’s eyes widened.

Arrieta spoke.

“Put forth your hand and receive it.”

“What is this?”

“You don’t know about the knight’s emblem?”

“Mmm. It’s the first time I’ve heard of it.”

Azell tilted his head in confusion, and he slid his hand forward. When he did, the shape made out of light was absorbed into the back of Azell’s hand.

‘Is it a magic that is imprinted into the energy pulse?’

Azell puzzled over it, and he tried inserting his magic into it. This caused a faint shape of a white eagle to appear on the back of his hand.

Arrieta spoke.

“It is your proof of identification that you are a knight. It was created, so people cannot impersonate a knight.”

“Huh-uh.” (TLN: sound that signifies wow or whoa)

Azell was impressed. While he was asleep, someone had come up with a way to prevent identity theft.

Arrieta smirked.

“Originally, we would have to call over the Crest maker, and he would have to make your crest. However, you haven’t taken the oath of loyalty, so we could do away with that. You can come up with your own crest, and have it made.”

“I will do that. I guess I’ll lose a lot of money.”

Knight have to have their own crest. The crest has to be something that had never existed before. The Crest makers, who create the crest for the knights and noble families, have extensive

knowledge about crests that already exists. They had the ability to make a crest that couldn't be forged, so they were expensive.

Arrieta spoke as she got on her horse.

“Let us depart.”

The party left the Western Border Fortress.

Arrieta spoke to Giles as she opened a map.

“Sir Giles. I heard you've visited the capital before.”

“Yes. It was around two years ago...”

“Then could you decide which roads we will take to the capital?”

“Yes, sir.”

As soon as Giles answered, Boar butted in with a dissatisfied expression.

“May I say one thing, princess?”

“Speak.”



“I came here with princess as a member of your escort. I’ll concede Sir Giles have more knowledge about the geography around here, but once we get close to the capital, it would be better for me to lead.”

Boar clearly balked at the idea of Giles deciding the path of their journey. However, it was widely known that Arrieta had an impartial personality, so he didn’t try to forcefully seize the leadership role away from Giles. Instead, he worked hard to persuade her.

Arrieta nodded her head.

“Your words have some merit. What do you think, Sir Giles?”

“I believe Sir Boar’s opinion is correct. I’ve lived in the capital before, but I’m not too familiar with the geography around that location. I’ll discuss it with Sir Boar before I decide the route we take.”

Giles didn’t resist, and he passively accepted Boar’s interference.

Arrieta spoke.

“I’ll entrust it to you.”

They had brought every item they needed for the journey, so they decided to bypass the town close to the Western Border Fortress.

Enora opposed against the decision.

“If we pass by this one then we will arrive at the next town during the night. Then princess won’t be able to have a proper lunch.”

“If you are worrying about the meals, then don’t worry about it. When I was on the battle field, I wasn’t picky on what I ate.”

“But princess...”

“Enora. This isn’t the palace. Moreover, I don’t want such problems to delay us. Therefore, we’ll stop only if the situation allows us to, and you’ll have to make do. I’m not going to ask for something that we don’t have.”

Arrieta spoke in an uncompromising manner, so Enora had no choice but to give up. It was an inconceivable situation for the Dragon Demon princess’ personal maid, who served her in the palace. However, Enora’s attitude was relatively flexible, so she didn’t show any signs of discontent. Azell was amused by Enora. As they traveled slowly up an inclined path, he sidled up next to her horse, and he started a conversation.

“Miss Enora, you are pretty decent at riding a horse.”

“At first, I had some difficulties. It has been a long time since I’ve ridden...”

When she traveled from her homeland to the capital, she had ridden a horse instead of riding a carriage. However, once she started working in the palace, she didn't have the opportunity to ride a horse.

Azell asked a question.

“Do you perhaps know how to fire an arrow?”

“How did you know that?”

Enora's eyes became wide. Azell smirked.

“I thought it was likely, since you learned to ride at that age.”

He didn't know what it was like in this era, but in Azell's time period, daughters of nobles learned how to protect themselves. One didn't need to be a daughter of a warrior to learn sophisticated martial arts. Amongst all of them, the most typical skill learned was horsemanship and archery.

Azell asked.

“How skilled are you with the bow?”

“I can't pull the string of a large bow. I'm lacking in strength....”

Enora answered shyly, and everyone looked at her with surprise in their eyes. However, Azell wasn't surprised. He just laughed.

“That's impressive. How about swordsmanship?”

“I didn't learn that.”

“Why not?”

“He(TLN: I'm guessing the father) said a daughter, who'll marry someday, didn't need to learn it. The family's sword technique puts great stress on strength, so he said I'll become wild.....”

“Ah ha. So that is why. How about Spirit Order?”

“It is a similar story. He said he didn't need to pass on his mysteries(TLN: secrets) to a daughter, who'll marry into a different family.”

“I see.”

During the Dragon Demon War, sons and daughters weren't discriminated. They were all taught Spirit Order in order to grow their military strength. Before the Dragon Demon war broke out, it was unthinkable for such things to happen. After the war, it became a matter of course for the males to succeed the techniques again. (TLN: before=>mostly male succeed, During war=>both

male & female, after war=>back to male-centric)

Arrieta spoke to Enora.

“I had no idea you had such talents.”

“These are unnecessary skills for a maid.”

“Does the head maid know about it?”

“Yes. I told her during the interview.”

“Hmmm.”

Arrieta now knew the reason why customs were broken to make Enora her personal maid. Since most of her personal maids didn't last long, the head maid must have assessed skills not needed by a maid in her evaluation.

Arietta was becoming curious, so she asked a question.

“I heard you have an older sister.”

“Yes.”

“Do you have any other siblings?”

“I have an older brother and a younger brother.”

“I see. Everyone is still at home?”

“My older brother went to the capital to study.”

Enora was nervous answering the questions. Until now, Arietta had never been interested in her personal affairs.

Arrieta had never thought Enora would last long. She didn't ask her anything since she viewed her as someone, who would be swapped out for a different person in the near future. However, after she looked at Enora's attitude and history, Arietta viewed her as someone she would get along for a long time. This naturally caused her to take interest in Enora.

“Where is the territory of Baron Balray located at?”

“Ah, our territory is in a rural area. It really can't be compared to the capital.... However, there are large fields, and it is a place where beautiful flowers bloom.”

Enora started telling stories about the sceneries of her homeland with soft eyes. From listening to her stories, one could tell that the territory of Baron Balray was quite rural. The territory would have a hard time financially supporting an heir being sent to the capital to study.....

Enora spoke as if she was homesick, but she suddenly looked at Azell as if she had suddenly thought of something.

“Uncle Azell is.....”

“Sir Azell.”

Azell cut her words short. He had been promoted to knighthood, so he wanted to decline being called an uncle.

Enora’s lips pouted.

“You just became a knight.”

“A knight is a knight. If you call me an uncle then I’ll call you little lady.”

“Mmm. Should we do that?”

“...no. No matter how I think about it I seem to come out on the short end, so let’s drop it.”

He didn’t want to be called an uncle, so Azell admitted his defeat.

Enora, while putting on a smile of victory, asked a question.

“Why did you think I learned archery?”

“You knew how to ride a horse. I just connected the two dots.”

Azell spoke as he laughed bitterly. Of course, it was an expression he made to put on an act as an ‘amnesiac person’, but it worked well on Enora.

“Ahh....”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m starting to remember bits and pieces.”

“Do you remember anything about your homeland?”

Arrieta queried. Those words caused Azell to fall briefly into his thought.

“I’m not sure. My homeland....”

Azell didn’t know where he was born. He had lost his parents during his childhood. He couldn’t remember anything.(TLN: he was too young to remember) He had grown up, while wandering from place to place. However, when he heard the word homeland, he could only conjure up a particular scenery. It was after the Emperor bequeathed him with the title of duke, and he became Duke Karzark.

Between the time the war had ended and up to the moment he had to emulate the Dragon’s Hibernation, he had lived through a



painful, but peaceful 2 years. He had fought for the land with his life on the line, so it became a symbol of peace to him.

Azell spoke with softness in his eyes.

“There was a flying dragon.”

“A flying dragon?”

“Yes. When it was about the time for the sun to come up, it would fly towards the east to hunt. When the sun set, it flew back west into the mountain. As I watched the figure of the dragon fly west every night, I would realize that the day had come to an end... This is what I remember.”

Near the Dukedom of Karzark, there used to be three dragons.

He had gone through countless Dragon Slayer's rituals, and Azell had already completed his Dragon Demon sword.

Humans and Dragons couldn't converse with each other, but Lord Azell and the dragons held mutual respect for each other inside their heart. Their presence kept the peace in the Dukedom of Karzark. During the time they were restoring the damaged land caused by the Dragon Demon war, they were almost never threatened by monsters. For reasons the humans couldn't understand, the dragons never caused trouble, and they were able rejoice in peace.

‘I wonder if they are still there?’

Azell suddenly missed that scenery. In this current era, he wondered which country the Dukedom of Karzark belong to? Had the name remained the same?

Azell still didn’t know about these facts. There were too many things he didn’t know about in this era.

Arrieta spoke.

“Maybe it’ll become a clue to finding your origin.”

It was rare to find a territory where dragons boldly showed themselves in front of humans. One should be able to pinpoint where that territory is from knowing just that....

“It’ll be great if I could.”

Azell sincerely wanted to believe that.

## Chapter 30 - Raised Social Status (4)

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The first day of travel passed without anything happening.

It wasn't known whether the people called the Dragon's Shadow had entirely given up on kidnapping Arrieta or they were avoiding operating within the influence of the Southern Border guard after failing once.

During lunchtime, they camped on the side of the road, and they reached the vicinity of a small town at night. Arrieta didn't need to reveal her identity. At a glance, one could tell their party was of high station, so they were able to pass through the gate without any problems.

“Are you not going to notify the lord of this town?”

“I think so. If I notify him, then our schedule would be unconditionally delayed.”

If she revealed her identity as the Dragon Demon princess, they had to hold a reception for her. The reception wouldn't end after she stayed for a night, and she would be put in a troublesome position.

She had to maintain her relationships amongst the noble society, so she probably couldn't excuse herself unless she had an urgent matter. This was why Arrieta refused to reveal her identity, and she decided to press on her way.

Arreita spoke.

“I’ll go wash and rest.”

“I guess I’ll go play with Sir Giles for a brief time.”

“What do you mean by play?”

Arrieta was unsure, so she asked a question. She couldn’t understand what he meant by the expression.

Azell replied back.

“We decided to spar against each other.”

“Ho oh.”

Arrieta showed interest. As a Dragon Demon, her inborn magical energy stood out, but she had trained in swordsmanship since her childhood. She was also a martial artist, who had learned various martial arts.

“Do you mind if I look on?”

“I don’t mind. Sir Giles might find it a bit uncomfortable.”

“He is also a knight, so he’ll consider me taking interest as an honor. Of course, wouldn’t he consider this an opportunity?”(TLN: to impress the princess)

“Mmm? I guess that’s how it’s going to be.”

If one could show one’s talent in front of the Dragon Demon princess Arrieta, it might lead to a promotion. Arrieta fully understood what her station signified.

Arrieta spoke.

“Moreover, he is a talent recommended to me by the commander, so I want to see his skills. He is still very young....”

“.....”

“Why are you looking at me like that?”

“Well, princess called Sir Giles ‘young’, and I thought it was really out of place.”

Arrieta was a 16 year old girl, and Sir Giles was a knight. No matter how young a soldier was, one would at least be 19 years old. When one heard such words, it was no wonder it felt out of place.

Arreita laughed bitterly.

“I can see how it could sound like that. However when I take issue with a person’s age, more often than not I don’t compare their age to mine.”

“I can see you doing that.”

“Sir Azell, what do you think about him?”

“Do you mean Sir Giles’ skills?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t think he falls short when compared to Sir Boar. I can’t predict how he’ll do in a real battle. I’m just looking at his ability as a Spirit Order practitioner.”

“I also thought he possessed a good amount of magical energy. His achievement is surprising considering his age.”

“When princess says those words, it’s.....”

“You are making commentary on every word I say. If this was the palace, I would have hit you hard based on your insolence. No wonder she is staring daggers at you from the side.”

Arrieta said this as she laughed. This caused Azell to sneak a peek to his side.

Enora was fuming, and she glared at him. It looked like she was holding herself back from saying a word to him. If Arrieta hadn't shown an indifferent attitude, she would have stepped forward, and said something.

Arrieta spoke.

“I'm not a Spirit Order practitioner, but...”

As a Dragon Demon, she couldn't become a Spirit Order practitioner. In the first place, Spirit Order was a technique made by humans for humans.

However, Dragon Demon magic didn't use magic as its foundation. The Dragon Demon race and the Dragon Demons used something that was more sensitive than magic. The technique could be considered the parent of Spirit order, and the technique called 'Dragon Spirit Skill' was passed down amongst them.

Arrieta was a Dragon Spirit practitioner. During a battle, this was the reason why she often used words of power as a medium for the Dragon Demon magic.

“I've seen a lot of Spirit Order practitioners around, so I have the ability to discern their abilities to a certain extent. It's hard to find someone like Sir Giles in my memories, who have this much achievement at that age. I've never heard of a family headed by Viscount Vince, but his offspring was well educated.”

“I guess Sir Giles’ family isn’t that famous.”

“At the very least, it is a family I have never heard of. There are as many noble families as grains of sand. Unless there is a relationship with the other family, one wouldn’t know their names.”

“I can see that....”

Arrieta probably had numerous names she had to memorize. As the Dragon Demon princess, she would only remember the renowned families or those who held special significance to the crown.

Also, after hearing her story, he understood why Sir Giles, who was born to a noble family and promoted to knighthood, was working as a soldier in the Western Border guard. His family wasn’t that high in status, and they didn’t have any connections. It was hard to earn a proper rank with only his skills.

Arrieta spoke.

“Then let us go. Where are you going to do it?”

“I saw a garden behind the inn.”

Arrieta, Azell and Enora went towards the garden. Giles, who had arrived earlier, was surprised.



“Princess?”

“I heard you two will spar.”

“That, that is so, but....”

“I want to see your skills, which the commander was so complimentary of. Can you show me?”

Giles, who was taken aback by Arrieta’s question, hardened his face. Then the light in his eyes changed as he answered back.

“It will be my honor.”

Azell was a bit surprised by his attitude.

‘Unexpectedly, he might have ambitions for success?’

From Azell’s point of view, Giles wasn’t a person that was too attached to promotion or power. When they were in the Western Border guard, he never imposed his authority over Azell, who was of unknown origin. Even today, he didn’t react to every instances of Sir Boar trying to seize the leadership role. A person like that was overflowing with enthusiasm when Arrieta expressed her desire to see his skills. It was odd.

‘Maybe he always wanted to in his heart, but his personality

didn't allow it?'

That might be possible. He probably wanted to show his aggressiveness on the battlefield. He probably wanted to be accepted for his skills, and receive a promotion through his accomplishments . However, there were those like him who were clumsy at creating various opportunities for promotions.

Giles spoke in front of him as Azell showed interest.

"Azell, no... Sir Azell. Could we change the arrangement?"

"How?"

After Azell was promoted to knighthood, he spoke to Giles as an equal. Before he had done so out of respect for his rank, but he didn't have any reason to do so now.

He also told Giles to treat him with ease, and he should drop the respectful form of speech. Unexpectedly, Giles smoothly accepted Azell's change in attitude.

Giles spoke.

"Let us spar, so we can show everything we got."

"We'll do that. However, let us restrain ourselves from using big technique with physical after-effects, so we won't destroy the

surrounding.”

“Understood.”

The two of them raised their swords and they faced each other.

---

Azell worried about what to do when he saw Giles, who was more serious than ever before.

‘What should I do?’

Giles still didn’t know about Azell’s skill level. It was because Azell had faced him, while he somewhat adjusted to Giles’ level.

However, Arrieta already knew about Azell’s skill level. She was probably the only person in this current era, who possessed the most information about him.

‘I guess I can’t half ass it.’

Azell thought about it for a moment, and he eventually came to a decision. However, it would be unfair for him to immediately show his skill against Giles. He decided to arouse his attention.

“Sir Giles. I’ll be attacking first.”

“This is unusual.”

Giles found it odd. Azell always waited and counter-attacked during their sparring sessions, and he had rarely taken the initiative. Azell had done this to sell the perception of ‘I’m short on magical energy’ to Giles.

Of course, Azell was still short on magical energy. The strength he had absorbed from the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was rapidly processed, and it was used to complete his second Ring of Life plus its dual banding. He had started making his 3rd Ring of Life, but it couldn’t be compare to his glory days.

However, if he compared himself from couple days ago, the difference was far apart as earth from the heavens. Not only did the amount of magical energy inside his body changed, but the quality had also changed. When one used the first level of magical energy, there is a big difference between amplifying it through one Ring of Life and two Rings of Life. After the Dual Banding is complete, the difference was again much larger.

If the person controlling the power was as skilled as Azell, then it goes without saying he’ll be outstanding.

Giles shivered as he looked into Azell’s eyes.

‘What is it?’

Until now, he felt a sensation he had never felt when facing Azell.

He had already accepted that Azell was a Spirit Order practitioner with outstanding techniques. However, when he faced him right now, it was the first time he felt an imposing feeling emitted from him. It felt sharp enough to cut.

Choo-paht!

In the next moment, a blade cut Giles, and it passed on by.

‘I’ve been had.....?’

In an instant, Giles felt the sensation of being cut. The blade flew out without showing any signs, and it accurately cut at his body.

However, even as this was going on, Giles swung his sword as he retreated.

Clang!

The swords clashed, and a sharp sound rang out.

This sound woke Giles from his stupor. Giles panted as he breathed rapidly.

“...what happened?”

“As expected, Sir Giles has a keen sense. I don’t know who his

teacher is, but he trained him well. Very thoroughly.”

Azell was laughing in front of him. As Giles saw him smile leisurely, cold sweat started dripping down his face. When fighting someone, he would watch his opponent, and he would predict the next move. Gaze, expression, breathing, movement of the shoulders, etc.... One had to process all the information from the five senses, and it became an ingredient for an insight.

Therefore, if one faced someone who was skilled then the opponent would, of course, try to disrupt the other's insight. The movement would blend substance and weakness to trick the opponent. It drastically cut down on the time needed to react.

But, the previous attack by Azell.... There were no warnings about when, where or how it would happen.

‘He didn’t even move. No, he moved after he thrust.’

Gile’s mind replayed the event from a moment ago.

They had started to lightly spread their magic to probe each other. Then Azell’s magical energy suddenly hardened, and the thread of mental wave emerged into Giles’ territory. The illusion of a blade sliced him.

Afterwards, Azell ran forward, he swung his sword.

Giles blocked the attack by luck. When he was learning his

family's martial arts, and Spirit Order Mysteries, he had learned a technique which enabled him to separate his mind and body. If he hadn't learned to block with this technique, then he would have lost on that single strike.

Giles spoke.

“...impressive. Even my father had never shown me a technique like that. I really thought I was going to be cut. It is akin to the hallucination magic used by magicians. How is this possible?”

At those words, Azell spoke as if he was a teacher lecturing his student.

“Spirit Order is a technique that can manipulate the mind. When one trains martial arts, you train your body, learn techniques, and then train your mind. However, Spirit Order is the opposite. As you train your mind, you are able to feel the movement of the magical energy, then you learn the technique. Finally, you apply it to your body.”

“Basically, this is possible if one learns the techniques that control the mind?”

“Yes.”

This was the reason why it was called Spirit Order. The Dragon Demons and the Dragon Demon race used Dragon Demon magic as their nucleus. It was an ‘intuitive and sense-based magic used

through one's body', so it had evolved into a different form of magic.

Azell was mystified.

'The techniques that handle the magical energy and the techniques that uses one's body, is on par with my era. Instead, there are some aspects that are better. He didn't luck into the previous block. It is the result of training an established technique.'

However, the techniques dealing with the mind was of very low standard. Was Giles inexperienced?

'Probably not.'

When he looked back at the events couple days ago, it wasn't the case. At the time, a small group of monsters didn't hide their mental energies, when they were carrying out a sneak attack. Moreover, the troops couldn't read their mental energy.

Even so, Giles had learned a high level technique in shielding his mind. It wasn't an active skill. It was like erecting a castle wall around one's mind. It was an naive way to do it, but the quality was above average.

It seemed like many of the techniques that could influence the minds of one's opponent was lost. If one thought about the origin of Spirit Order, this was totally absurd.



## Chapter 31 - Raised Social Status (5)

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Azell pulled back from asking his question then he spoke.

“Well, I guess this will be the end of our warm-up.”

“Sir Azell, you are a very kind man.”

“I would rather be called a fair man.”

Azell knew Giles figured out his intent, so he laughed. After the first exchange, Giles threw away any thoughts of looking down on Azell. At the very least, he accepted the truth that Azell was much better in terms of skill.

Giles strengthened his mental barrier. The magical energy he could use in an attack was noticeable less, but he had no choice. Normally, he would erect an adequately sturdy wall, but wouldn't Azell pierce through it easily?

Then Giles started attacking recklessly.

Che-ch-e-che-che-cheng!

It was a frighteningly fast attack. Every time the swords hit each other, sparks flew, and a brilliant silver light traced through the air.

Giles, who was pouring on a dizzying attack, suddenly felt that Azell's movement was strange. Azell vigorously moved as he matched his rhythm, but now his movement had slowed enough to be different. Then he flowed smoothly to the side.

‘Huk!’

As if he was toying with Giles' doggedness, the blade that broke through burst forth in an oblique angle.

Giles retreated in fright. As if he was waiting for him to do so, the point of the sword tracked him like a dancing snake.

Chang!

Giles barely blocked the blow, and he distanced himself from Azell.

Giles asked a question, while perspiring cold sweat.

“What are these sword technique?”

He realized a step too late. Azell was using several types of sword techniques.

He had thought he had come to grasp Azell's sword techniques after couple sparring session. However, he didn't realized Azell had learned a highly heterogeneous sword art.

Azell replied.

“I don’t remember what it is called. However, I learned a lot of sword arts in a hodgepodge manner.”

His words were true. Azell had learned several dozens of sword arts during his lifetime. He comprehended all of it to make his own sword style. After the Dragon Demon war ended, the Emperor decreed that his sword style would become the official sword style of the Nadick Empire’s Royal Knights.

‘I wonder if it survived?’

After 220 years, he wondered if the sword style he created was still in existence. If it was, it would have been his greatest honor.

“I’ll accept my loss.”

“Mmm? Already?”

“It’s a shame, but I don’t think I can be your opponent with my current level of skill. Even though I launched my attack at you, I couldn’t even force you to take one step backwards.”

As his word indicated, the flashy attack Giles performed wasn’t able make Azell move a single step. He had stood in place like an embedded nail. Moreover, he had kept Giles in front of him, and he

had deceived Giles' sense to create an opening.

Giles had more magical energy than Azell, and he was also stronger and faster. However, Azell's technique was overwhelmingly superior that it was enough to overturn all the physical advantages he held.

Giles spoke.

"This was a great lesson. May I ask you to keep being my opponent in the future?"

"Of course."

After Azell nodded his head, Giles bowed towards Arrieta.

"I'm sorry for showing my shortcomings."

"No, it was an entertaining show. Sir Azell, you are a very mischievous man."

"Is that so?"

"If you decide to teach someone, I'm sure the pupil will have many complaints about you as a teacher."

"This opinion seems to be coming from personal experience. Am

I mistaken?”

“No. Unfortunately, you are right. You have some similarities to my teacher.”

“Ho oh. Then you’ve been taught by a good person.”

“You have an unusual talent of painting your face in gold.(TLN: painting oneself in a good light) If my teacher, Duke Tarantos, heard you then he would most definitely... Mmmm. He would have laughed.”

“The person who taught princess was the Dragon Demon Duke?”

Giles was surprised, so he butted in. This caused Arrieta’s eyes to move towards him. He lowered his head in surprise.

“I apologize.”

“No, it’s fine. We aren’t in a grandiose location, so you don’t have to worry about it. To tell you the truth, it’s annoying.”

After she complained, Arrieta continued speaking.

“Dragon Demon Duke. Yes, it is him.”

“My god. That person rarely shows himself even on a formal

occasion....”

“Well, he is someone with a lot of ties to the crown. If the crown requests it then he’ll comply without complaining.”

At those words, Azell tilted his head.

‘Isn’t Dragon Maken Duke a fairly high sounding nickname?’

Well, Azell’s own nickname was also grandiose. It couldn’t be helped since he was the one who held the most accomplishment in the Dragon Demon War, and he had also beaten the Dragon Demon King Atein.

Azell asked.

“What kind of person is this Dragon Demon Duke?”

“....you don’t know who Dragon Demon Duke is?”

Giles stared at Azell with a dumbfounded expression as if to say he couldn’t believe such a thing was possible.

Azell felt a sense of deja vu since he had received the same kind of stare from someone.

‘Ah, it’s the same expression as Rick when I mentioned I didn’t

know who the Dragon Princess was.'

The Dragon Demon Duke was a figure as famous as the Dragon Demon Princess, so if one didn't know them, one would be treated as a spy.

Arrieta laughed.

"Sir Azell has lost his memory, so it is understandable."

"Truthfully, I didn't even know about you, princess. When I asked if the Dragon Demon Princess was the princess of a country founded by the Dragon Demon race, army doctor Rick looked at me with the same expression Sir Giles made."

"This has been a very refreshing experience."

"Is that so?"

"From the time I was born to now, no one has failed to recognize me. They might not know me personally, but they know about the existence called 'Dragon Demon Princess.'"

"Indeed."

Azell nodded his head. For the past several days, he had studied about this era, and her existence was common knowledge.

Azell asked.

“Is Dragon Demon Duke a title inherited like the Dragon Demon Princess?”

“No, it isn’t like that. The Dragon Demon Duke compared to the Dragon Demon princess... Mmmm. Yes. It is appropriate to think of it as the difference between legend and common knowledge.”

“So you are saying Dragon Demon Princess is common knowledge, and Dragon Demon Duke is a legend? ”

“Ah.....”

He had already heard about the Dragon Demon race joining the human society. However, it was refreshing to hear about a concrete example. The Duke was from the Dragon Demon race, and he was a great noble in a kingdom built by humans. He was also the princess’ teacher.

‘This is quite fun.’

Azell wanted to meet him at least once.

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The worshipers of the Dragon Demon race was everywhere.



Currently, the world was misguided as it was ruled by humans. There were many people who believed in the fulfillment of the ideals set forth by the Dragon Demon King. Those believers had infiltrated all ranks and classes. Even if it isn't someone from the Dragon Demon race, who grew up discriminated, there were other numerous people cooperating with them, while hiding their identity.

This was one form of religion. These were people who couldn't boldly step into the sun. They were waiting in the darkness for the savior, Dragon Demon King, to return someday...

“So that's how it is. The situation has become complicated.”

The secret society was called the Dragon's Shadow. Regina received a report from her underling, and she mumbled in a hoarse voice. Amongst the countless organizations worshiping the Dragon Demon King, the Dragon's Shadow was a high ranking organization with many lesser organization beneath it. The fact that she was in this group signified she was a big fish. She could go anywhere in this world and request cooperation from the lesser organization connected to the main branch. The information network was especially frightening.

When she was about to speak to her underling, who had his head down, she heard a woman's voice from inside.

“What is so complicated?”

Then time came to a halt.

No, in reality, time hadn't stopped. However, it felt like it had for Regina.

The underlings in front of her had stopped moving. They hadn't just stopped moving. They didn't blink nor did they breathe. They just stopped in place.

Regina turned to looked at the person causing this bizarre phenomenon.

"Niberis-nim. If you leave the humans in this state, then they'll die soon."

"Don't worry about it. Even I know that much."

Niberis was a woman in her mid-20s with black hair, and brown eyes. From her outer appearance, she looked like a cold beauty, but she wasn't human inside. She was a high ranking executive, who held a much higher position than Regina.

Niberis glanced once at the frozen underlings, and their status changed. They were still frozen in place, but they started breathing slowly. She didn't want to reveal herself to the worshipers, and this was a way to minimize information from getting out.

Niberis spoke.

“Answer my previous question.”

“Including the Dragon Demon princess, they are a small party with only 5 people.”

“Five people?”

“Yes.”

“There are only that many people accompanying the Dragon Demon Princess?”

“Yes.”

“What is she thinking? Maybe this is a imposter in disguise? Is this a diversion?”

“We have confirmed that isn’t the case.”

“Hmmm. Isn’t that more convenient? Why are saying it has become more complicated?”

Niberis tilted her head in question. She didn’t understand why Arrieta chose to do this. Moreover, she didn’t understand why Regina thought this mission had become more complicated.

Regina mused inside as she looked at her.

‘She grew up sheltered.’

Niberis was the offspring of a high ranking executive within the organization. She possessed powerful strength, but she hadn't really gone out into the world. She was a high ranking magician, but that didn't mean she was smart in the ways of the world.

Regina explained.

“Even if the Dragon Demon Princess could bring as many troops to bodyguard her, there is a limit to how many she can bring. Even on the high side, it would be around 70 to 80 people. Even if it was the Western Border guards, it would be impossible to deploy any more troops.”

“Wouldn't that be more troublesome than 5 people?”

“From our perspective, it would have been better if she came with a somewhat large retinue. Even if there were a lot of them, most of them are ordinary soldiers. The large number means their traveling speed would be slow, and it would be easier to find their location.”

“Hmmm. The small number means most of them are elite troops, and they will have an easier time running away? Is that what you mean?”

“Yes.”

Regina clearly saw through Arrieta's intention. Moreover, she knew this was all done to make it more difficult for her pursuers.

"This region has almost none of our agents in place. It would be impossible for us to mobilize too many of our men."

"They are small in number, so why would we need a lot of people?"

"We need it."

"If I go, do you think it will be lacking?"

Niberis' eyes started to fill with displeasure. Regina spoke haltingly.

"Of course, if it is Niberis-nim, the Dragon Demon princess and anyone next to her would be sufficiently overwhelmed."

First, she spoke those words to quell Niberis' mood. However, this wasn't just a flattery, it was the truth. Niberis had grown up sheltered within the upper echelon of the secret society, so her sense of reality was a bit lacking. However, Niberis possessed enormous strength, which Regina couldn't even compare to.

"However, our goal isn't to fight and defeat them. We have to capture them. If a person of the Dragon Demon princess' caliber

starts to go on the run then it won't be easy to catch her. Moreover, there is a restriction on how we can act in a highly populated location."

"I see."

Niberis understood what Regina was trying to say.

However, she refused to accepted it.

"Still, Regina, you only think of this situation based on your level." (TLN: calling her a small fish/thinking too small)

"Yes?"

"If I go forth, then you don't have to worry about such things. First of all, I'm going out to capture a mere Dragon Demon Princess. This is like a king using his best sword to butcher a chicken."

Niberis laughed coldly. Regina's pride was rustled, but she spoke, while keeping her outer appearance blank.

Niberis spoke.

"This is the only time I will go out."

“I understand.”

Regina replied back. In the current world, the existence of a Dragon Demon King worshiper was not tolerated. If it was a land ruled by humans, this was the case everywhere. There existed secret societies that also tracked down Dragon Demo King worshipers

Niberis spoke.

“I’ll leave the preparation to you. Since you are so worried about it, I want you to make me a stage with utmost caution.”

“Yes.”

Regina bowed her head.

# Chapter 32 - Those Who Teach (1)

---

Arrieta and her party's journey was smooth. After leaving the territory of the Western Border Guard, four days had passed without anything dangerous happening.

However, this didn't mean there weren't any problems. The mood within the group was steadily getting worse.

The culprits were Azell and Boar.

Wa-jang-chang!

As they finished their meals within the camp, the empty bowls were noisily flipped over. Then Boar let out his murderous intent.

“Stop trying to mess with me.”

“We are in the same party, so I'm trying to assign the dish washing duty. Is that me 'trying to mess with' you? That concept is new to me.”

“That work is only suited for a base born like you. You dare to request someone with noble blood to do such work?”

“Whoa, how scary. How dare a mere knight like me not recognize a lord. I treated you wrongly. May I ask how many knight are pledged to your service, lord?”



Azell was being sarcastic. Enora, who was far away, had a hard time breathing, because of the murderous intent emitted by Boar. However, Azell didn't show any signs of being intimidated.

Boar growled.

“You are holding up your head too high, since the princess favors you a little bit! I don't know where you rolled in from, but your base born blood doesn't know anything about honor. How dare you talk to a knight with such a dirty mind!”

” I didn't realize the title of a knight was so important in the era after the rule of Nadick Empire's Emperor Haven. Even back then knights weren't considered to be so special. Also...”

Azell smirked in front of him.

“When a talent-less bastard with a trash-like mind praises himself to be a 'noble', it really nauseates me. ”

“What? How dare you not know your place! I was being patient, because we are in front of the princess. However, I can't stand it anymore!”

Sssroooong!

Boar was enraged, so he unsheathed his sword.

Azell looked at him as if he was pathetic. Boar made a request to Arrieta.

“Princess! His man has insulted my honor! Please allow us to have a duel!”

“Mmmm.....”

Arrieta had a conflicted expression.

The event had progressed this far, so her decision was simple.

The party moved with an emphasis on speed, so they hadn't stayed in any of the towns. They had camped along the way, and Enora had been in charge of cooking the food. Azell didn't mind doing the odd jobs, and Giles, who was used to military life, also helped with the work.

Arrieta wasn't in a position to do anything. She didn't want to refuse doing chores, but her station didn't allow her to do these kinds of work. Most of all, Enora was resolute in blocking her from doing the chores, so she could take part only when her magical power was needed.

During all of this, Boar did nothing. He refused to gather dead leaves and branches as they got ready for camp. He didn't help in the dinner preparation, and he didn't wash the dishes. When it was time to leave, he didn't pick up after himself.

If one considered his past, it was a reasonable attitude. He was born into a noble family, and he was promoted to the royal knights. During that time, he didn't have much experience of traveling outside, and even when he did, he had his underlings do the annoying work. Even though, Azell could guess his circumstances, he wouldn't tolerate his attitude. Eventually, Azell told him he was doing less work than the princess, and that was too much. Azell tried to put him in charge of washing the dishes. When he did, Boar exclaimed, 'How in the world could he do such a thing', and he became angry.

'He is making such a fuss, because he really hates washing dishes. If I had to make an award for the world's most irritating noble, then he would probably be nominated.'

Originally, there were a lot of people like him in the ranks of the nobles. In any situation, they refused to do 'menial work'. They insisted those works would damage their honor.

During the Dragon Demon War, the population was going through such a harsh tribulation that such perception had thinned out. However, now that the world had become livable again, their dirty true nature had spread again like a disease.

Azell took a peek at Arrieta. Without moving his lips, he used Whispering to relay his intentions to her.

-Please allow it, princess.

After a moment, Arrieta also used Whispering to reply back. Whispering could be used with Spirit Order, but it was a technique that also existed within Dragon Demon magic, and magic.

-Mmm? But....

-Any ways, wouldn't it be hard to order him to wash the dishes in your position?

-If it is needed, then I will.

-Miss Enora will stop you. We need to use this opportunity to step on him once. Moreover, I want to.

-Mmm. This feels like participating in a bad prank.

-Jeez, I know you find him annoying, princess.

-I won't deny that.

Arrieta laughed bitterly.

She had a much more noble bloodline than Boar, but Arrieta was surprisingly very self-aware. She was taught by teachers, who possessed carefree attitudes. Also, she had grown up being influenced by the ideal that said, 'Your power exist to protect the people.'

Arrieta spoke.

“I understand. I’ll allow it.”

“Princess?”

Enora was surprised, so she turned to look at her. However, Arrieta continued to speak in a calm manner.

“Except you can’t forget about the mission you have accepted. I order you to do your best not to harm each other’s life.”

At those words, Boar spoke.

“I understand. No matter how insolent and lowly a person is, life is a precious thing. I just wanted to fix his attitude. I have no intention of taking his life.”

Azell’s eyebrows shot up at those words.

‘Ho-oh?’

His insolent words grated a little bit against his nerves, but his other words were a bit unexpected. I guess he wasn’t scoundrel, who treated other’s lives like flies, when his pride was involved?

Arrieta spoke.

“The loser has to respect the wishes of the winner. As the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta Weil Rulain, I’ll be the witness to the duel between Sir Boar Zilred, and Sir Azell Zestringer.

Azell and Boar stopped at a location a little bit off from the camp fire. Azell took out his sword. While they looked at each other, both of them placed their swords in the middle so it slightly touched.

Arrieta made the declaration.

“Start the duel.”

---

Azell and Boar stood face to face.

Both their figures contrasted each other. When he set out as Arrieta’s guard, he had received a sword that was big enough to be used with either one or two hands. Azell loosely grabbed his sword with both hands as his sword pointed downward. If seen at a glance, the posture made him look like he wasn’t interested in fighting.

On the other hand, Boar had a long sword in his right hand, and a shield on his left. He was in a typical knight’s stance. His shield was in front of him, and he was positioned to swing the sword at any moment.

Boar taunted.

“Your body is so weak that I don’t know where I should hit.”

Azell’s eyebrows rose.

For reference, Azell’s body had improved quite noticeably. He had trained his body during the travel, so his body was taking shape incrementally.

However, his body was still frail compared to a completely trained, muscle-bound knight.

‘This guy really... He has a talent for annoying others?’

Azell didn’t even think about the fact that he had also taunted his opponent. He glared at Boar.

Even though he didn’t have much muscles, his body was rapidly becoming strong. It was because of the Dragon’s power he had drunk using the Dragon Slayer’s ritual. On the surface, there weren’t much change, but a human body that has drunk a dragon’s power becomes robust. Even if someone has the same body build, there are those who are stronger than the other. In the same vein, there was a difference between becoming sturdier through the dragon’s power, and training one’s body.

‘Well, if we compare our pure physical traits, the bastard is on a much higher level than me.’

Azell passively accepted his fact. Azell was taller than him by a finger length, but Boar had a thoroughly trained body. He ignored his emotions, and he was able to coldly assess his opponent. This ability was something every one of his teacher had complimented on. Azell studied Boar, and he was able to analyze Boar's power in a flash.

“I'm different from you, who grew up in a nice environment. I'm able to think rationally. This is why I'll tell you this. You will be hurt badly. You will be hit until you feel pain akin to dying. However, I won't injure you in a fashion where your power will diminish.(TL:he won't hurt his cultivation) I'll promise you that.”

Azell had already completed his 3rd Ring of Life in the past couple days. He had wanted to test out his power, so he liked this turn of event.

‘Yes. I knew I needed to beat this bastard at some point.’

Boar responded to Azell's taunt.

“Hnng! That is what I should be saying. As a knight, who knows about honor, I'll let you attack first! Come at me!”

“Really?”

Azell decided not to refuse his offer. He took one long stride.



In a flash, Boar became surprised.

‘What is that?’

Azell had taken a step. However, the distance of 5 meters that existed between the two disappeared in that one step.

Tuh-ung!

“Kuk!”

The sword struck the top of the shield, and Boar’s body shook.

‘What is it? What is this damage?’

It was weird. The sword strike wasn’t especially ferocious, but the moment he blocked it the blow traveled through his entire body. Even his bones hurt.

He started to slowly retreat when Azell took another step. His light step looked like he was taking a stroll, but he had moved to an ideal distance for bring down his sword.

Tuh-ung!

After another strike was applied, Boar staggered backwards.

When Arrieta saw this, she let out a sigh of praise.

“That is an interesting technique.”

If one watched from the side, the move could be understood. Azell looked like he was taking a normal stride across the surface of the ground, but he was actually sliding to close the distance. It was like sliding across ice.

When facing him from the front, it was hard for an unsuspecting opponent to decipher his movements. It ruined the timing and sense of distance of the opponent, so one would have a hard time responding to it.

Even when he was sliding, there was no noise. This meant it was a Spirit Order technique. However, Azell was very adept at disguising his magical energy use that one couldn't read what he was doing.

Giles spoke.

“His sword strikes are surprising.”

“I wouldn't say it is surprising. It would be more apt to call it spiteful.” (TLN: the word used is a mixture of spiteful/naughty)

“.....”

Giles laughed bitterly at Arrieta's observation. He completely agreed with her sentiment.

Azell had broken Boar's timing and sense of distance. His attacks were like a bait being thrown to a fish. These attacks were perfectly made for a shield to block. From Boar's perspective, he wanted to block with his shield to make an opening, so he would counter attack.

However, Azell had foreseen his tactic, so he was using this Spirit Order technique. The impact bypassed the shield, and it spread across Boar's entire body.

The same pattern repeated three times, and Boar finally saw through Azell's tricks. On the fourth sword strike, Boar didn't block it with his shield. Instead, he avoided it then he counter attacked.

Azell lightly flowed past it. Boar staggered a few step forwards before he was able to regain his balance.

"Ooh-ook. That is a surprising technique!"

"I can't hold back my excitement at being praised by such a noble person."

"Truthfully, I'm impressed. When an opponent is good, it is a knight's duty to acknowledge that fact! I'll acknowledge that you posses high level techniques."

Boar glared at Azell with eyes burning with his fighting spirit.

He already knew from Azell's first sword strike what he was trying to do. Even if he knew this, he couldn't block the 2nd and 3rd strike. Initially, he thought Azell had thrown an easily blockable strike. However, the impact had passed through his shield, and he couldn't defend against it.

If one was a Cord Rope master, one was able to easily bypass a wall to strike at an enemy. Even if the opponent was wearing a thick armor, it was possible to deliver damage past the armor.

Also, when one uses such a method, the opponent usually uses an offsetting technique. However, he knew that Azell's technique was coming, but he couldn't come up with a move that would cancel it out.

## Chapter 33 - Those Who Teach (2)

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Tung! tung! Tuh-tuh-tung!

“Ooh-ook! Kook!”

Azell hit Boar consecutively. By then the pain had seeped into his bones. He let out a moan, and he started stagger.

It wasn't just the shield. Whenever their swords met, the impact was being transferred to Boar.

Azell's movement was too skillful. Boar had realized what Azell's intentions was, so he tried to avoid hitting against Azell's sword at any cost. He used the fact that his shield was round to shed the blows at an angle. He avoided exchanging blows, and he tried to focus on attacks that would put his opponent on the defense.

However, it was all for naught. Azell read all of his movements as if he was reading a dictionary.

It was inevitable. He couldn't block with his shield, and he couldn't hit his sword against the other's sword. It was basically fighting with both his hands and feet bound.

“Huh-uk, Huh-uk....”

The duel had been only going on for 5 minutes, but Boar was

about to pass out. Sweat was pouring down like rain, and he was having a hard time breathing.

This shouldn't be happening. He was a Quadruple Master, and he could easily surpass the physical limitation of a normal person. If he used Spirit Order, he could be in full body armor and fight for several hours.

However, the continuous hits and the strain on his mind robbed his stamina in a flash.

“Let's end this.”

Azell spoke indifferently, then he started to swing his sword. Even though Boar was about faint, he still raised his shield.

However, Azell's sword was like a lie as it passed through the shield. After passing the obstacle, the sword touched the end of Boar's chin.

“Kuk... Don't insult me. Kill me!”

Boar spoke in a shaky voice. It seemed like he was trying to be dignified, but one could easily see he was scared.

Before Azell could say anything, Arrieta stepped forward.

“Stop! End it there.”

“Azell Zestringer is the victor of this duel. Do you disagree, Sir Boar?”

“...no. I acknowledge my defeat.”

Boar answered as his body shook from humiliation.

---

At that moment, Azell spoke.

“Truthfully, you impressed me a little bit. You have more guts than I thought, Sir Boar.”

At those words, Boar looked at Azell with surprised eyes. Azell guessed Boar didn't expect a compliment from him.

He opened his mouth with difficulty.

“I, I'm also impressed by your techniques. I apologize for my rudeness. You are an outstanding martial artist. You deserve to be acknowledged by the princess.”

His face had turned red. It seemed like he was embarrassed. However, his words weren't forced, and he could tell Boar was speaking from his heart.

‘What a funny guy.’

He had thought Boar was an arrogant and impudent prototypical wastrel of a noble, who couldn't put himself in someone else's shoes. Truthfully, he was acting that way. However, he had an unexpected side where he was able to quietly accept what he had experienced.

Azell saw him again as a martial artist. He was young, and he was born with some talent. He came from a good family so he had received a lot of assistance. However, he had become a Quadruple master, so he had a strong will and he showed signs of being thoroughly trained.

He might be worth looking over for awhile. Azell spoke as he thought this.

“It's time, Sir Boar.”

“Huh?”

“You have to do the dishes?”

“.....”

Boar made an expression as if he had chewed on a bug.

“Koo-ook. It is h...humiliating, but I have to accept the result of



the duel. I have no choice, but do it as a knight! I'll do it!"

If someone saw this, one would think he was smearing ink on their family's honor. He was acting like requiring him to wash dishes was a crazy request. Azell queried in dismay, when Boar acted as if this was some tragedy.

"By the way, I'm actually really curious about this, so I want to ask you... Sir Boar, why do you consider washing dishes to be shameful?"

"Isn't it the work of a the base born? It isn't a work a noble knight should do."

"But I saw you do some miscellaneous works? Why is that so different?"

Azell carefully looked back on Boar's action as he asked. Boar never prepared the camp, prepare dinner nor wash the dishes. However, he didn't refuse any tasks that required strength. He did Arrieta's work for her, but I discounted it since she was the princess. There were also instances involving Enora.

'Miss Enora. I might be presumptuous, but I'll help you despite it. I'll help you onto the horse.'

Enora was short, so he helped her get on the horse.

'Miss Enora, I'll move the belongings.'

He also helped Enora move the packs.

Boar spoke as if he didn't know what Azell was talking about.

“Isn't it a knight's duty to use his strength for a delicate woman?”

“...if you see it like that, then wouldn't the preparation for camp be hard, also? Why didn't you help?”

“Each person has their own roles. A woman doing her duty shouldn't wield a knight's sword. Vice versa, a knight shouldn't infringe on a woman's work space. Of course, she has her own work to do, and isn't it a job she is capable of doing?”

“.....”

This guy's code of chivalry was quite twisted. Azell turned to look at Giles in dismay, but he was nodding his head if he agreed a hundred percent with that sentiment.

Azell let out a sigh.

“Any ways, even if he discount that, the preparing the camp isn't Ms Enora's job, right?”

“That, that is true. However, it is a job for those beneath me.”

“”If there was a servant or squire present to do it for you, then that should be the case. However, we don’t have that person here. Tell me the truth. Sir Boar, you’ve never gone on a mission without a servant or a squire?”

“.....”

Boar’s face turned red as if he was hit in a sore spot. It was as Azell predicted.

Azell let out a sigh.

“What would happen if you were chosen for an mission that requires a small elite group, and there are only knights of higher position than you?”

“That...”

“Of course, you would have to divvy up the chores. This includes preparation for camp, dinner preparation and even washing the dishes. Do you think a fairy will show up to do the miscellaneous work for you?”

“Mmmm.”

“I won’t ask you to cook. However, you should take a portion of the work Giles and I do. Would that be so disgraceful? If you think

so, please throw away that thought. Let's ask the princess."

When Azell pointed the arrow at her, Arrieta flinched. Azell asked her a question.

"Princess. Have you ever been accompanied by only high ranking knights?"

"Yes. I don't have any battle experience with them, but we had a situation where we had to move quickly. For a whole day, I had to ride with Count Arhen, and Sir Jarsten, the deputy of the Royal Knights."

"How was it?"

"They knew how to prepare the camp, and they also prepared the meals. I helped a little bit, but they grumbled that I shouldn't do the work."

"You heard it, right?"

When Azell asked him a question, Boar had a dumbfounded expression. His mouth was open, and he looked like he had just been punched.

"Did...did they really do those chores?"

Azell didn't know this, but Count Arhen was a warrior in his 60s,

who gained his reputation as a blade master. Jarsten was a dignified middle aged knight from a great family.

Arrieta spoke as she thought about that time.

“Yes. They said it reminded them of their apprenticeship days...”

They had also complained about doing such work at their age, but Arrieta omitted that fact.

Azell asked a question.

“Didn’t you do such work during your apprenticeship, Sir Boar? Didn’t you do some miscellaneous work?”

“...I, I’ve never done it.”

“What?”

“I’ve never apprenticed under a knight.”

Boar spoke, while he became embarrassed. Azell was confused.

“Uh, how could that be if you are part of the Royal knights?”

According to Azell’s general knowledge, this didn’t make any sense. Even if one is from an important background, one had to go

through a step-by-step process to become one of the Royal Knights. One was made an official knight once one becomes somewhat serviceable.

Arrieta spoke.

“It isn’t impossible. After becoming an official knight from outside, the prominent knights has to give a recommendation. Then one has to pass the evaluation given by the upper ranks of the knights. There is such a method to enter...”

“I entered that way.”

Boar acknowledged this fact. Azell thought as he looked at him.

‘So this is why he is lacking in some fundamental concepts!’

He heard from Giles that Boar’s family was lead by Marquis Zilred, and they were known to be a prestigious family. Boar was the third son, but he possessed excellent talent. He had become a Quadruple Master at a young age, so the family had supported him extensively.

It was understandable to see why Boar’s sense of value was twisted. It was surprising that he still had an innocent aspect to his personality.

Boar spoke.

“After hearing princess’ words, I realized my way of doing things is wrong. From this day forward, I will diligently share the workload. Moreover, Sir Azell.”

“Huh?”

“I would like to apologize once again for my rude behavior up until now. I was the one who was lacking, and I insulted you when I couldn’t even recognize your skill level. Of course, you have every right to be angry. Even if you weren’t a knight, you have enough skill that can’t be ignored by anyone.”

“You don’t have to think of it so rigidly....”

“Then I’ll go do the dishes.”

After saying this, Boar took off his armor. Then he picked up the dishes he flipped over then he went to the creek.

Arrieta mumbled.

“I can’t get a grasp on what kind of man he is.”

Everyone there all nodded their head.

---

After the commotion, everyone went to sleep.

Azell, Giles and Boar rotated to keep a night watch. Enora and Arrieta was excluded, since Giles and Boar strongly insisted a princess' sleep shouldn't be bothered for such a task.

Arrieta had no choice, but to follow their words. She wasn't averse to doing any task, since they were already short-handed. However, she also knew the people below her would be uncomfortable if she insisted on doing the work.

“Hmm.”

Azell had taken the first watch, and he spent the time meditating. He slowly resonated with the mana in his surrounding, and the newly produced magical energy seeped into his entire body to fill his energy pulse.

‘Someone is watching us.’

At the same time, Azell detected someone observing them.

Even though he was meditating, he didn't slack off on guarding his surrounding. Instead, he had opened his senses wide open, and he had sensed someone watching them from afar. Moreover, this person was using magic.

‘When we were in the town, I wasn't sure... But this confirms it.’



When they visited a city or a town, he had felt someone's gaze on them. However, their party was eye-catching. There was also a lot of people around, so they inevitably received a lot of looks from others. The gazes didn't have any intent of attack nor did anyone use magical sights. He had his suspicions, but he couldn't be sure.

However, he was sure now. Someone was using magic in the night to view them from a distance.

‘After we left the town, I didn't feel the gaze for awhile... Either he has a specialized skill in tracking or maybe he is using a hunting dog?’

Azell and his party members hadn't covered their tracks while moving. There were numerous ways to track them if their group was the target.

‘If it's those Dragon's Shadow bastards... It wouldn't be strange if they attacked right about now.’

The party was camping at an uninhabited location. This would be a golden opportunity to attack, so why weren't they? Azell was puzzled by this fact.

## Chapter 34 - Those Who Teach (3)

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When he thought about it, there were three possibilities.

‘First, it might be, because we might not be far enough from the city.’

If they attacked, it wouldn’t take too long for the party to return to the city if they decided to do so. At the very least, Arrieta could. If she decided to move at a high speed by herself, she could move much faster than riding a galloping horse.

‘They might be here to only track us. The main force might not be here yet.’

Azell thought this possibility was very likely.

The Dragon’s Shadow had already failed in their attempt to kidnap Arrieta, even though they brought a powerful force. Even if it was an immense secret organization, it would be hard for them to mobilize a superior force to the one before. They were probably keeping tabs on their location in real times until enough forces could be gathered.

‘Lastly...they might be setting up a trap on the road we are taking.’

When the party chose their route, they didn’t worry about confusing the enemies, who might be tracking them. They just

picked the roads that will allow them to reach the capital the fastest.

This in turn made it easier for the enemies to predict their actions. It wouldn't be strange if they focused all of their best forces on the route they were taking to face off against the party.

‘This is the worst case scenario.’

He couldn't guess the number of forces the Dragon's Shadow would mobilize. If it was like last time, then from Azell's perspective, it wouldn't pose him much of a threat. However, what if they were hiding forces that exceeded the last one?

‘Since I don't know about the size of the organization or their structure, it can't be helped.’

The worshipers of the Dragon Demon king were a type of heretics. They were strongly ostracized by society, so they secretly moved in the shadow. Of course, there wouldn't be much known about them.

‘Currently, the only thing we know is that their place of origin is in the north, and the location is called the Field of Darkness. We don't have any other helpful information.’

The north of the continent was a frozen land. It was the devil's territory named Field of Darkness. It is a place where the Dragon Demon Race, who were against the humans, were assembled. It

was also the place where the worship of the Dragon Demon King originated from. The Dragon Demon Race hid themselves where human couldn't tread. They gathered worshipers from the shadow, and they manage the organization from there.

‘Huh?’

He suddenly heard a rustling sound. Azell glanced up to see Arrieta get up, and approach him.

Azell spoke as he lowered his voice.

“Princess?”

“Hmm. Somehow, I can't sleep. It's strange.”

“It might be because you slept until noon, while missing breakfast?”

“You are pointing out a woman's sleep pattern. Is it something an elegant knight should say?”

Arrieta sat down next to Azell with a coy expression.

It was something he had found out after the travel started, but Arrieta slept a lot. If they were able to find a decent accommodations, she always slept in late. This caused their party to slow down a little bit. As this happened twice in a row, they

decided to modify the schedule to allow her to sleep until midday.

Azell spoke calmly as he looked at the camp-fire.

“There is an enemy present.”

“What did you say?”

Arrieta was taken aback. Azell didn't look at her as he spoke.

“They aren't showing any signs of attacking any time soon. They aren't even coming close to us. I can feel them using far-seeing magic to observe us.

“Mmm....”

Arrieta frowned, and she asked a question as she looked around her surrounding.

“You also knew about it last time. How are you able to do so?”

In Arrieta's life, she had never been told by anyone that her sense were dull. Even she wasn't able to notice them yet Azell had easily figured them out.

Azell spoke.

“It is a technique.”

“A technique?”

“I’m able to check if someone’s gaze is on me. It is a technique possessed by Spirit Order Practitioner.”

“What is the theory behind this ‘technique’? I would understand it if you were a magician...”

“In the end, Spirit Order is another form of magic. It is possible to master the mind with a Spirit Order technique.”

“That’s surprising. I’ve never heard of anyone using such techniques except for you. Similar to me, I’ve seen people detect others when they detect signs of life within a certain range...”

Azell smiled bitterly when he heard Arrieta’s word. It was necessary for him to know these techniques in the Dragon Demon war. He was able to detect gazes, animosity and even murderous intent through the technique. It was strange to see these techniques not used in battle any more.

He wasn’t sure when he faced off against Giles, but he was sure now after facing off against Boar. Both of them had the same weakness. The part of Spirit Order that could be considered the foundation was missing, and they had only developed the outer parts. From Azell’s perspective, this seemed like a bad joke.

Suddenly, Arrieta asked a question.

“What kind of technique did you utilize on Sir Boar? May you teach it to me?”

“It’s simple. I slightly twisted his senses.”

“You twisted his senses?”

“Since Sir Boar is a Quadruple Master, he knows several defensive techniques. He can counteract attacks that can deliver damage by piercing through his defense. When facing an opponent like him, there are several technique that could overcome the threshold of his defense. Amongst them, I used the most basic method.”

Spirit Order is a technique that interacts with the mind. Boar was like Giles. He was weak to techniques that dealt with the Mind. The only thing they could do was to put up a barrier around their mind.

The erected mental wall was sturdy, but it wasn’t a problem for Azell. He used a clever method of finding a doghole. He took a roundabout way akin to climbing over a castle wall, and he was able to disturb Boar’s mind.

This resulted in Boar’s mind making a very slight error every time he blocked Azell’s attacks. Therefore, Boar was either subtly early or late on his blocks.

‘A good amount of techniques had survived. However, it was as if the energy pulse had been blocked. The true meaning of the skills, and the more advanced techniques seemed to have been lost....’

It wasn't as if Boar didn't try to counteract his methods. He realized there was errors within his perception, so he strengthened his mental barrier. He also utilized differed defensive skills.

However, Azell had countless skills he could use to deal with each situation. From the outside, it looked like Boar was falling for the same trick, but the inside circumstances was different.

‘Are all the Spirit Order practitioners like this?’

Azell was most curious about this part.

During the Dragon Demon War, the sharing and learning of techniques happened actively. However, this generation had no incentive to do so.

The knowledge of Spirit Order and Magic not known to others itself became a form of power. During the Dragon Demon War, the united race had battled fiercely against the enemy, but it wasn't so any more. If one taught the secret techniques to others, it basically amounted to throwing away one's fortune. Still, it would be too rash to judge the entire population's standard after seeing only Boar and Giles.



Arrieta was impressed by his explanation.

“So that’s how it is. I’ve often seen Spirit Order practitioners affect the opponent’s mind, yet I was unaware of this possibility.”

Boar and Giles had techniques that dealt with the mind to a certain extent. They could let out an oppressive energy, or they could paralyze the opponent by letting out a shout, which imitated a predator’s roar. These kinds of technique was a great boon on the battle field. Azell’s technique was far more intricate and refined compared to theirs. Like magic, he was able to produce a variety of effect, and he was able come up with new methods.

Suddenly Arrieta spoke.

“Your teachers must be amazing people.”

“Why do you think so?”

“They were able to help grow someone like you. Well, I don’t know about your personality, but at the very least, I’m very sure on your ability to teach.”

“Mmmm....”

Her words rekindled a memory in Azell.

Arrieta spoke with a sincere expression.

“Until now, I thought I had enough real battle experiences.”

After having her coming of age ceremony at 15 years old, she had experienced a lot of battles.

At times she would have to show her strength in border disputes. She sometimes fought monsters, and other times evil black magicians.

It was a brutal work for a young girl. However, Arrieta carried out her mission without saying a word of complaint.

As she did all of this, she started gaining confidence as a martial artist. She wouldn't be shaken up like her first battle experience, and she wouldn't have to see her allies be sacrificed....

“However, I found out I was in error in the recent events.”

Arrieta's battle experience was akin to a child picking out her favorite food.

She had never fought against a strong opponent, who was on even grounds with her. Even if she was tactically at a disadvantage, her martial arts had always been better than the others. When she was threatened by a small group with enough power to threaten her, she had been baffled. She couldn't properly use her skills, and she had been led by the nose by the enemy's design.

“Sir Azell. If you weren’t there, then I’m sure I would have been captured by those wicked people. If my teacher saw it, he would sigh at my pathetic state.”

“I thought you held firm, and you coped well considering the situation.”

“You don’t have to try to make me feel better.”

“No, I’m telling the truth. Well, from my perspective, you were only out of your depth when the Earth Dragon showed up. For the rest, it wasn’t too bad even if I wouldn’t rate it a perfect score.”

Two years had passed since she had experienced her first battle. She was still 17 years old, so he had no reason to give a harsh evaluation when he considered her age. Arrieta smiled bitterly.

“I thought you were going to flatter me, but you didn’t forget to pinch me in a sore spot.”

“Well I’m a bit of an honest man.”

“You are an ill-tempered man.”

Arrieta pouted, and unlike her words, she looked like any girl her age.

After a moment, Arrieta asked a question.

“Sir Azell.”

“Yes.”

“Do you have a lot of experience facing against strong foes?”

“Mmmm. I’ve done it a lot.”

He had overcome countless near-death experiences in the Dragon Demon war. Every single member of the Dragon Demon race possessed huge amounts of power. Amongst them, the ones with their names known to others were like moving disasters.

Arrieta spoke.

“Could you tell me some stories about your teachers?”

“My teachers...”

At those words, Azell started thinking about his past. For him, it had been only a couple years ago, but it had become a distant past for humanity....

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Azell’s first teacher was an old man, who was part of the civil militia. He had taught Azell martial arts in his childhood when he

lived near the town next to the mountains. He used to be a mercenary when he was young. He taught Azell a sword art that required a strict structure.

“He was a very strict old man.

Azell didn't tell her, but the old man's name was Rogan.

He had taught the young members of the civil militia. Rogan took on the role of a drill sergeant. He had a high assessment of Azell's potential, who hadn't learned any martial arts, yet he was someone who had assassinated the thieves without an adult's help.

Unlike the youths of the civil militia, he had taken in Azell as his disciple.

If he thought of those times, Azell had learned under him for 3 years until his death, and he was the one who laid down his foundation. The old man thoroughly taught him the basics, and the system of his sword art. He also used his extensive experience as a retired mercenary to foster a flexible maneuverability in Azell.

“My second teacher.... Mmmm. He was a weirdo. From his head to the end of his toes, he was weird in every way.”

After Rogan's death, Azell left the town, and he wandered the world for 2 years as a mercenary.

He was young, so it was common for people to be ignore him.

However, every man capable of fighting was needed at that time. In the presence of an arrow storm, Azell had returned alive after distinguishing himself, and he slowly started to make a name for himself.

During all of this, he had met an one-armed swordsman.

“An one-armed swordsman?”

Arrieta asked in surprise, and Azell answered.

# Chapter 35 - Those Who Teach (4)

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“Yes. Moreover, he was also an one-eyed person.”

Azell’s second teacher didn’t have a left eye or a left arm. He was an one-eyed and one-armed swordsman.

His name was Balf, but he didn’t tell Arrieta his name. At the time, he was one of the most well known name amongst the mercenaries in the eastern part of the continent.

Logic would dictate a person with physical disabilities wouldn’t be able to function on a battle field. If he was any other mercenary, he would have been forced into retirement.

However, no one could disregard Balf.

“He was a Sextuple Master.”

“He was a Sextuple Master? A mere mercenary was able to rise to such heights?”

Sextuple master was a height only a select few had reached inside the entire Rulain Kingdom. However, the person with such skills was a mere mercenary?

Azell spoke.

“He wasn’t even a Master before he lost his eye and arm. When he was confined to his bed, he had fiercely cultivated his mind. He was undaunted by his disabilities, and he was able to reach such height with much efforts.”

Balf became interested in Azell when they had fallen into a devastating trap.

The monsters controlled by the Dragon Demon race used the night as cover to ambush the humans. They were fundamentally nocturnal creatures, so their night eyes were much better than the humans.

Of course, the humans knew about this, so they were very vigilant during the night. However, at that moment, the company affiliated with Azell and Balf had fallen into a trap set by the Dragon Demon race. Their command structure had been shattered, and they were in the process of fleeing.

When the fleeing soldiers finally felt they had barely escaped, the enemies had tracked them down, and the night attack started.

Confusion and fear started spreading like wildfire. The soldiers weren’t even able to resist as they fell one by one.

Few amongst them fought back, but they couldn’t turn the tide of battle.

Azell wasn’t fighting to turn the tide of the battle. He just wanted



find a way to survive. During the confusion, Azell defeated the enemies one at a time, and before he knew it his back was against Balf.

Balf eyed Azell, and he realized Azell wasn't a Spirit Order practitioner. However, he was surprised Azell was able to use his developed senses to stay alive as he accurately assessed the situation.

‘Hey, kid. You want to be my disciple?’

After they were able to escape the enemy's encirclement, Balf made the suggestion. From Azell's perspective, he had no reasons to refuse his proposal. If he looked back on it, he was able to earn this opportunity, because of his first teacher Rogan.

Azell guessed Rogan was a noble in hiding. He suspected this since the sword art he taught was structured. Moreover, Azell didn't know this at the time, but he had taught him the foundation he needed to learn Spirit Order. This was why his senses were superior to others.

“My second teacher focused on developing my senses to the extreme.”

As a Spirit Order practitioner, it was natural for one to train the mind and senses. However, Balf had obsessively focused on teaching these aspects.

“A typical example was dodging attacks in the dark. In the latter stages, he would hang swinging knives on the ceiling then we would spar in a room in absolute darkness.”

“It was a brutal training method, but I would venture you had an easy time overcoming it.”

“Truthfully, that is so. It wasn’t that hard up to that point.”

Azell truthfully acknowledged it. If he looked back on it, he was a very talented student. Each obstacle thrown at him by his teacher was solved in order by him.

However, Balf wasn’t satisfied with this. He covered Azell’s eyes, and Balf forbid him from piercing through the darkness with Spirit Order techniques. Later on he even plugged his ears to seal his hearing.

“I even learned about reacting to threats with parts of my body tied.”

Sometimes, he had to fight with one of his arms tied.

Another time, he had to block torrent of attacks sitting down with his legs tied together.

He also had to train with both arms tied behind his back, then he was taught to fight while he was hung backwards on his feet.

“The point of the training was to never lose one’s senses in any type of situation.”

Balf’s training was so harsh that Azell had almost died numerous times. Even a powerful Spirit Order practitioner like Balf couldn’t completely control the dangerous training scenarios.

“That is... Isn’t it abuse instead of training?”

“I won’t deny it. At times, I thought he was really crazy. I thought my teacher had gone crazy, and he was trying to kill me.”

“What happened to him?”

“He died. He had an illness.”

This was the reason why Balf took in Azell as his disciple. He wanted to pass on his skill he had earned through overcoming his disabilities.

However, once he took in Azell as his disciple, his potential was so high that Balf got greedy. He wasn’t satisfied with just passing down his techniques. He wanted Azell to reach a level he was never able to.

His impending death stirred up a madness within him. He lost all his sense of reason, and he drove Azell to the brink a couple times

as Azell had to overcome numerous near-death experiences. Most of the enormous wealth Balf had accumulated during his mercenary days were used to treat Azell.

“I learned under him for 2 years.”

When Balf passed away, Azell was already a Quadruple Mast at age 17. Moreover, his senses had surpassed Balf's, and it had approached a level only Balf could dream about.

‘His grave might still be there.’

After the Dragon Demon war ended, Azell had moved Balf's grave to the territory of Marquis Karzark. Did any remnant of the grave survive until the present day?

After thinking up to this point, Azell asked Arrieta a question.

“How was it for princess?”

“Mmmm? You aren't going to tell me about your 3rd teacher? You are asking for my story?”

“My story had gone on long enough. When I have the chance, I promise I'll tell you the story. I want to hear about the teaching you received from the Dragon Demon Duke. ”

“You are trying to dig up a girl's past? It is rude, and it isn't an

action befitting of a knight.”

After Arrieta made the joke, she started talking about herself.

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“Well. That person... If I borrow a description given to him by others, he was a mad man.”

“...what?”

Mad man. Basically, he was a crazy person.

The legendary figure in the kingdom, and the person, who had taught the Dragon Demon Princess her sword art, was called such a name? Azell was taken aback, and Arrieta could only laugh at this sight.

“Initially, my teacher was offered the position. When he came to the royal throne, he came to ask for a permission.”

“What did he ask for permission?”

“He didn’t want any outside interference when he taught me. Moreover, he wouldn’t treat me like a royal. If his conditions weren’t met, then he wouldn’t accept the position as my teacher.”

Teaching a royal family member was prestigious in and of itself.

However, one had to be careful when dealing with the royals. This was the reason why the Dragon Demon Duke refused to be the royal family's teacher. He declared he couldn't teach, while he had to ingratiate himself to his student.

The Dragon Demon Duke's attitude was well known, but they still invited him to teach the siblings Arrieta and Seigar...

“Ah, Seigar is my brother.”

“I've heard about him.”

The Dragon Demon Prince, Seigar Weil Rulain, was 2 years younger than Arrieta. He had his coming of age ceremony this year, and he had entered into the battlefield.

“Anyways, we insisted on inviting the Duke of Tarantos as our teacher, because he is a relative of our mother.”

Arrieta and Seigar was an indirect descendant of the Duke of Tarantos on their mother's side.

Since they had that connection, they aggressively requested him to be their teacher.

‘These children has to go out into the world to fight. We need a teacher who'll train them to be stronger than everyone.’

This was the argument given by the Dragon Demon queen.

In every generation, there could be only one Dragon Demon prince and princess. There were times when only one of them existed.

After they have their coming-of-age ceremony, they'll be sent into battles, so their destiny was very arduous. After the crown was given to the next in line, the new Dragon Demon queen weds the sovereign. She would have to fight for the honor of the throne until she gave birth to her children.

Of course, the throne was very selective in which battles they would enter. However, live battles were unpredictable, and unexpected events happened. Moreover, there were many people relying on their powerful strength, so some had died fulfilling their duties.

This truth made the Dragon Demon queen want her children to possess enough power to face their oncoming destiny.

“The throne accepted his conditions, so I started receiving his guidance when I was eight.”

“Did you train with your brother?”

“No. From the beginning, he didn't have confidence in teaching two people. He told Seigar to come when he reached my age. Therefore, I was solely able to receive his instructions for two

years.”

Arrieta was dragged outside of the influence of the throne, then she received instruction on the battle field by the Dragon Demon Duke for 2 years.

“That person was as much of an ill-tempered person as your teacher, Sir Azell. For example, after teaching me for around half a year, he dropped me deep inside a forest with only one sword in my possession. He required me to survive and live alone for one month.”

“Around half a year... Weren’t you still 8 years old?”

“Yes.”

“How could he do such an act to a 8 year old girl....”

“It was also winter at the time. I really thought I was going to die.”

Arrieta laughed bitterly.

She was a young 8 year old girl, but she was also a Dragon Demon. With instructions from the Dragon Demon Duke, her physical ability had already exceeded a grown adult’s capability. She had also learned the basics of the Dragon Energy.



Still, she had to survive in the winter wilderness with only a sword, so it was a brutal tribulation. If she thoughtlessly made a fire then it would attract the monsters. She had also gone into dangerous areas as she chased after her quarry. She had to overcome frequent brushes with death....

If she thought about it right now, she felt a more sense of crisis during that time compared to when she first stepped into her first battle. At that time, she was weak and inexperienced in every facet.

“There were also other unforgettable experiences. He dropped me in the middle of an unknown city rampant with criminals, then he ordered me to come back to the estate without being seen....”

She had received a lot of training in areas unrelated to martial arts and Dragon energy. At the time she wondered what she was doing, but she understood the purpose of the training now.

Azell was impressed.

‘Indeed. I understand why princess’ personality is like this now.’

From Azell’s perspective, Arrieta was really weird. Even if one was part of the royal family, one develops a sense of reality when one come into frequent contact with the lives of one’s subordinate. Even if he took this into account, Arrieta was too informal compared to her station as a princess.

‘It’s because of her teacher.’

Arrieta had a teacher with an excessively unfettered and disordered mind, so she looked at the world differently from the other royal family members. Even if one was of common birth, she treated them like people. She also developed an eye for evaluating the other’s skill without any bias.

Azell spoke.

“I want to meet him at least once.”

“You want to?”

“Yes?”

“If you return to the royal palace, I could probably set up a meeting. I’m sure he would be amused to see someone like you..”

“Well, I’m fine with that.”

“Also.....”

Arrieta spoke after she hesitated for a little.

“If you have time, could you face off against me?”

“Face off against you... What do you mean?”

“I meant sparring.”

“Mmm. It won’t be a problem for me, but Ms. Enora will get angry.”

“That is why I’ve been holding myself back until now. However, my body is restless when I see you spar daily with Sir Giles.”

Even if she was a 17 year old girl, Arrieta was a martial artist, who had trained rigorously since her childhood. During this trip, she wasn’t in a position to use her sword, so she quietly acted as an authority figure. Therefore, she was a bit restless.

Azell spoke.

“Ms. Enora won’t stand for this.”

“I’ll just order her to watch us obediently.”

“That is abuse of authority.”

“Isn’t authority meant to be used in a situation like this?”

“Moreover, she can’t do anything towards her superior, so she will turn her grievance towards me....”

“Then just take the beating from Enora. I heard subordinates are suppose to be protectors for their superiors.”

“....Wow. You are too much.”

When Azell started to shake, Arrieta laughed.

This was how the night progressed.

# Chapter 36 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (1)

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Niberis loved the dark when there wasn't a single speck of light present. She could achieve complete serenity only in a space with this kind of darkness. However, she loved the darkness, not the silence.

She was staring in to the empty darkness when a whisper entered her mind.

-You haven't concluded your business yet?

She heard a voice from a very distant place. From across the mountains, lakes and even beyond the boundaries drawn on the map by humans, the voice reached the dark snow-covered fields...

Niberis answered.

"The preparation is finished. We'll have it wrapped up soon.."

-Why are you taking so long?

-That place is a dangerous land for you.

-If you aren't careful, they will realize your existence. There is a danger of the Dragon Demon Duke moving

-Maybe even Count Michael.....

There weren't only one voice. From various places from the continent, the voices flew in, and they were having a conversation as if they were sitting next to each other.

“Do we have any reasons to fear them? They are parasites living off the humans.”

Niberis revealed her distaste.

The Dragon Demon Duke, and Count Michael was listed as people they had to be cautious around in the Rulain Kingdom. Dragon Demon Duke was of the Dragon Demon race, and Count Michael was a Dragon Demon.

There weren't that many from the Dragon Demon race, who had integrated into the human society, so their names were well-known. They were able to live longer than humans, and most of them held great power. There were few who didn't train their fighting technique and magic after assimilating into the human society. Most of them cultivated their talent to spread their fame with their strength.

From the perspective of Dragon Demon King's worshipers, they were existence to be afraid of, since they'll indiscriminately kill the worshipers. However, Niberis wasn't afraid. Her voice indicated she was unsatisfied.

-We can't underestimate them.

-Our forces are too weak to go against the Rulain Kingdom. If we let down our guard, then we might meet with disaster.

-Niberis. We all acknowledge you possess great abilities, but....

"I understand. However, there is a reason why I had delayed carrying out this mission."

Niberis felt disgusted.

In the organization, she was considered to be young. Moreover, she was treated like a child. Now that she thought about it, the old elders were basically like senior citizens nagging at everything. She felt her irritation well up.

Niberis spoke.

"I'm being sufficiently cautious. I am waiting for the day when the clouds will cover the moon. When the world is blanked by complete darkness, I'll take care of them."

The power of the Magicians were significantly influenced by the surrounding. It also depended on what their specialty was in magic, and where they placed their source of magic.

As a Magician, Niberis' source was the darkness.

When the darkness grew thicker, her power grew stronger. Moreover, on a night without a moon, her presence wouldn't leak out. She could covertly put up a barrier that could isolate one from the outside.

She hadn't attacked Arrieta's party, because she had been waiting for this day. She had chosen a suitable location and the day to attack Arrieta's party. Then she prepared as she predicted the climate.

"The one with the name soaked in sin has a secret.... I'll definitely find out what it is."

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For good or for bad, a person doesn't change easily.

However, if given a chance, a person could change in a surprising way.

It had been a while since Azell was able to experience this truth.

"If...if you don't mind, could you give me some pointers, Sir Azell?"

Boar asked after he summoned his courage.



The day after the fight, Boar didn't complain as he shared in the work. He did the dishes, prepared the camp and he also cleaned after himself. He even asked for things to do from his own volition, and the discontent he had in his eyes from before melted away like snow.

Still, he didn't get along with the other party members. Previously, he kept a natural distance between them, but now he hung back while he studied us.

He knew why Boar was doing this. Azell, Giles and Arrieta discussed each other's techniques after sparring sessions, and he probably wanted to join in.

After four days after the duel, he finally worked up his courage.

Azell was a bit surprised at his change in attitude, but he readily accepted it.

"I'll welcome it any time."

Arrieta spoke when she saw this.

"You are really popular, Sir Azell."

"I guess so."

“Unlike me.”

“...Hahaha.”

Azell awkwardly laughed when he saw Arrieta sulk.

Since Giles sparred with Azell, Arrieta wanted to spar with Giles. However, he said he was afraid his inexperience might lead him to make a mistake. He was afraid of making a mistake, so he declined her request. This caused Arrieta to sulk.

This was the same for Boar, who joined them later. During the spar, Azell discreetly put out a feeler. The two of them told him they were uncomfortable by the fact Arrieta was a woman.

“Mmmm. That is... The fact that she is of royal blood makes it overwhelming. Moreover, she is a woman. I don't think...”

Boar gave a similar answer.

“I've never pointed my sword against a woman. I want to fulfill princess' expectation, but....”

There were women fighters in the Rulain Kingdom. However, the number was low compared to the male counterparts. Moreover, chivalry was a bit full of machismo, and narcissism. These two young men were earnest knights, so from their perspective, they felt uncomfortable crossing swords with a woman.

Azell was simultaneously baffled, and understanding of the two people's attitude.

“Well, what if your enemy is a woman? Last time there was a woman amongst the group called the Dragon's Shadow.”

“Mmmm.”

“T, that is.....”

Azell clicked his tongue inside as he looked at the conflicted Giles and Boar.

‘Jeez. It turned out like this after 220 years have passed?’

During the Dragon Demon War, there were a lot of female enemies. Whether it was Dragon Demons or those of the Dragon Demon race, both males and females exhibited overwhelming power. Moreover, there had been a lot of human women, who joined the Dragon Demon King's camp. They recruited people who were shunned by the society. Then they guided those with magical talent, and they were commonly used as troops. Magical talent didn't discriminate between gender, so it was common to come across a strong female magician.

This was why Azell faced a woman using all of his might. However, it seemed this generation of knights didn't feel the same way.

‘These guys are being troublesome. It’ll be trouble if I do nothing.’

If they hesitated when facing Regina, because she was female then their head will be severed in a blink of an eye. It was imperative to get rid of their awkwardness when fighting a woman.

Azell gave Arrieta a suggestion.

“...this is why I wan’t you to give them an order.”

“Are you trying to make me a bad woman?”

“It will be your noble sacrifice.”

“You are skilled at putting a pretty package over it. Now I’m sure you are a bad man.”

“You got me.”

Arrieta snorted then she followed Azell’s instruction. After that day, Giles and Boar was forced to fight Arrieta. Moreover, they experienced getting absolutely annihilated by her.

In the beginning, they forcefully insisted that they were worried Arrieta would get hurt. However, Arrieta snorted then she

dominated both of them.

“Both of you are very prideful. Even the kingdom’s famed knight tried their best against me without holding their skills back. How can the two of you, who are so young, be so arrogant?”

This made Giles and Boar embarrassed, but they still refused to yield. They acknowledged Arrieta’s skill, but their pride was hurt when they lost to a 17 year old girl.

From that point on, they faced Arrieta with a serious attitude. Since this was a sparring session, Arrieta didn’t bull them over my using her Dragon Energy. This allowed her to experience a meaningful sparring session.

However, a problem occurred on that very night.

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‘Mmmm?’

Azell’s eyes opened in the dead of the night.

Originally, they had planned on staying in a village across the mountain, but several small accidents during the trip delayed them. In the end, they weren’t able to cross the mountain, and they had to camp outside. One of the small accidents was actually coming across a party with a broken carriage axle. It had broken when they were running away from the monsters.

His party chased away the monsters. While receiving their thanks, Arrieta's party helped them return to the previous town they had just left.

This caused a delay, so they had to sleep outside. They had hoped to avoid this.

“...Sir Azell?”

Boar, who was standing guard, turned a questioning look towards him. Azell put a finger to his mouth. He signaled to Boar to stay quiet.

Even though, there was a night watch, Azell hadn't lowered his guard. Since he already knew someone was watching them, he couldn't be careless.

Even when he was sleeping, he put up a barrier fence that reacted to a specific set of triggers. Some might think this could be only done by a Magician, but it was possible for a Spirit Order practitioner to use this 'technique'. It was established as a technique in Azell's time, and it had been passed on since then.

Something unknown was caught in the barrier fence.

‘This evil energy... Is it a black magician?’

He felt a dark and damp energy of darkness.

This energy was hiding magic. He could sense someone was trying hard to hide their existence.

However, he had been trained by the one armed swordsman, Balf. Azell's absolute senses was focused to detect the energy leak coming front the hidden one. He was sensitive enough to feel the reverberation caused by the energy.

‘Moreover, this ground resonance.....’

Azell touched the ground as he focused his mind. He used the vibration caused by the slight tremor to find the large numbered group approaching them from a couple hundred meter away.

‘However, I can't sense their group thought. A big fish has shown up.’

If it was a normal person... No, even if it was a Spirit Order practitioner, they would have ignored the faint and barely existent vibration from the ground. However, Azell had used it to speculate the existence of the enemies.

However, when he expanded his senses, he couldn't feel their group thought, so he knew this was the result of someone using the power of magic. This person was different from the Dragon's Shadow Magician, who used the monsters to attack them in the Balan forest. There was a powerful magician here, who probably

held the common knowledge used in the Dragon Demon War.

Azell immediately woke his companions up.

-Everyone wake up. Don't make a sound. Just pretend to be asleep.

He didn't open his mouth. He delivered his message using Whispering. Then he used a faint mental energy to naturally stimulate his eyes to open.

The reason why he used such a cumbersome method was simple.

He felt gazes on him. It wasn't just one or two people. He was sure the enemy was observing their location from within visual range.

'Regina. That woman is here.'

Azell never forgot the energy signature he had once seen. Of course, this was limited to those like Sir Giles, who had magical energy.

'Also, Kirion.'

From beneath the earth, he could feel Kirion's energy signature. When the enemy starts their attack, he'll probably use his special skill. He'll use his magic that allows him to freely travel



underneath the earth to ambush them.

‘Still, how is the bastard hiding his Dragon Demon energy?’

He was able to sense their existence using the mental wave and magical wave that was faintly flowing out. However, he couldn't feel the Dragon Demon energy used by the Dragon Demon. It was the same last time. It was thoroughly hidden enough to fool Arrieta and also Azell's senses.

‘These bastards wasn't that skilled... Did they develop a new method during my sleep?’

The society treated the Dragon Demon King worshipers as if they deserved to die. Therefore, it wouldn't be too strange if they developed a technique that allow one to hide themselves. Wouldn't 220 years be enough for this?

Azell had already asked about the skills developed during his sleep. For example, Giles used a defensive technique that could separate the mind and the body.

‘Hmmm.....’

When he was deep in thought, Arrieta opened her eyes as she asked a question.

-What's happening?

# Chapter 37 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (2)

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-The enemy is here. It is the Dragon's Shadow.

-What? I can't feel their presence at all.....

-Several of those from the previous attack is present. Moreover, a more talented magician seems to have accompanied them. There are also numerous amount of monsters approaching us, but I can't discern their exact number.

-Mmm.....

Giles and Boar was taken aback. They tried expanding their senses, but they couldn't sense anything out of the ordinary.

Boar queried.

-Are you sure, Sir Azell? I don't feel anything.....

-I'm sure. Just put your body against the ground then focus on the vibration of the earth.

They had increased their skills by sparring against Azell, but he hadn't taught them any of the techniques he knew. This era was different from the Dragon Demon War where one would disseminate one's technique.

Azell had realized the mindset of the fighters like Giles had changed in this era, so he tried to imitate their ways.

However, he had to convince them right now, so he had to pass them the knowledge that was common during the Dragon Demon War.

Everyone followed Azell's direction.

-There really is a ground vibration.

There was a slight vibration felt through the earth. Still, it was strange to feel this ground vibration in the middle of the night. The only other explanation was the vibration was a precursor to an earthquake.

Azell spoke.

-Every should quickly arm themselves. Our enemies are observing us already, so we don't have to be quiet. They'll probably attack us right away.

His speculation was correct. Their enemies were slowly closing the distance, and they were waiting for their forces to get into place. When the party members suddenly stood up to arm themselves, the enemies were startled into movement.

Oooooooooooooohg.....!

At the same time, a strong magical waves started spreading. It started around a location about 50 meters away from the party, and it spread in a circular manner. As the wave spread, it started distorting the space.

‘I knew it! A big fish has appeared!’

After he had awaken in this era, it was a level of power he had experienced with the Earth Dragon. Azell’s senses became sharp, and alert.

Wooooooooooooo!

From the surrounding, darkness fountained forth from various locations. It spread like a thick fog. When it swept across the campfire, the world turned pitch black.

Azell was surprised when he saw this.

‘We’ve been had! These bastards buried a magical item beforehand!’

Azell had finally realized this was a stage prepared by the enemy to capture Arrieta.

Until the hidden magical item receives a signal from the owner, it

was in a sleep mode where one couldn't detect even the echo of its magic. There weren't any signs of the earth being dug up, so he guessed Kirion had used his ability to move through the earth to perform this task.

If someone was this thorough in their preparations, Azell had no chance of noticing what was happening. Azell thought about what happened during the day.

‘Shit. Maybe those people were the minions of that bastard?’

They wouldn't have been able to pull this off unless they could confirm where our party would stay for the night. This meant the ‘people in trouble’ they had met earlier were deployed by the Dragon's Shadow. There was a high probability that they were used to get the party's attention and delay them.

‘No matter how I look at it I underestimated them since they were normal people.’

When he thought about it, their behaviors looked to be a bit forced. However, he knew they didn't know any magic nor did they practice Spirit Order. They were normal people. He overlooked their behavior since they were being chased by monsters and they had met a party with the high stationed Arrieta and her knights.

However, it was quite possible for the Dragon's Shadow to have used them in their plot. They could be Dragon Demon King's followers or people simply hired with money.....

Googoogoogoogoogoogo!

As the earth shook, the darkness fountained up like a tsunami. One couldn't see an inch ahead inside the darkness, but Azell was able to sense the large curtain of darkness. It had a radius of about about 100 meters, and it was dome-shaped.

Moreover....

<Hoo Hoo Hoo Hoo Hooo.....>

From inside the darkness, he heard a bleak laughter. It gave one the creeps just from listening to it. It was a voice that would stimulate one's instinctual fear.

Azell sensed someone with a sword approach him.

<You will die in fear inside this darkness. You possess the name of a sinner, and you deserve to die.>

When he heard the words directed at him, Azell mumbled as he frowned.

“...are you perhaps the Dragon Demon I killed from before? Your voices are pretty similar.”

<You remember me. I am Jackal.>

From inside the darkness, the enemy Dragon Demon he had killed in the Balan Forest approached him. It was Jackal.

<I've returned from hell to kill you!>

Jackal had been revived from death, and his glowing eyes were blazing in front of Azell.

---

It was terrifying for one's eyesight to be shut off. One couldn't even see an inch ahead yet he he knew something was aiming a sword at him with animosity.

However, Spirit Order practitioners were more comfortable dealing with such a situation compared to a normal person. They trained their mind and senses first instead of training their bodies. Even if their sight was blocked, they had learned methods for comprehending the surrounding's state of affair.

‘Still, this situation might be a bit too difficult for the others.’

Even if one was a Spirit Order practitioner, they were still human. It couldn't be helped since all humans relied heavily on their sight. If one hadn't trained like Azell in reacting to situations where a part of one's senses was cut off, then it was a difficult proposition.

A sharp sword flew towards Azell.

Shweek!

However, Azell avoided it as if he could see the sword.

Truthfully, he was able to see it. The one with the sword was emitting a yellowish light from his eyes, so one could see a faint outline of him.

<You dare look away when I'm in front of you?>

“Well.....”

Azell smirked.

“You look too ridiculous for me to concentrate on you. I can't help it if my eyes wander. You became a corpse that hasn't quite decomposed yet. Isn't that right, Dragon Demon? If you decided to go for the decomposed look then you should go for it all the way. What kind of state are you in?”

Jackal, who had become a revived corpse, was a sight one would be afraid to see in one's dream. His body was decomposed about half-way, and his eye-socket was empty as it let out a yellowish light.

However, Azell looked at his figure with perfect composure.



‘It’s isn’t like there were only one or two bastard who had revived to take their revenge on me.’

It was quite common for Azell to experience such an attack during the Dragon Demon War. He had killed too many high ranked enemies, so many of them attacked him after they revived.

<You bastard! You dare.....!>

“Also, it didn’t seem they didn’t put too much effort into your revival. You are weaker than before....”

At Azell’s mocking words, Jackal ran towards him in anger. Then a sharp flash of light gleamed.

Kwa-jahk!

About half of Jackal’s body was sent flying. Azell had easily avoided Jackal’s attack and he had counter-attacked.

“...I’ve become stronger yet why do you believe you can strike me? Did you think if you attacked me after your revival, I would exclaim ‘My god! This can’t be happening! You should be dead!’ Did you really think I’ll be afraid?”

<Ooh-ook.....>

“If you really thought that, then I feel sorry for you. My personality is a bit lacking for me to be considerate towards you. You have a weaker imagination than that of a three year old.”

<You, you bastard! I'll kill you!>

The single strike cut his body in half, but he hadn't died.

If it was a high rank revived being, it possessed heart and soul like a real living body, and it was able to resurrect again like a restored broken dish.

Azell saw Jackal's mangled body come back together as if he was turning back the time. Moreover, Jackal couldn't wait for his body to be restored, so he charged Azell in his half-broken state.

“Oh well. He's hot-tempered since he woke up from being dead.”

This was Azell's intention. In a flash, a pure white flame wrapped around Azell's sword.

‘Star's Breath.’

Hwahhhhhk!

This was a Spriit Order technique developed to deal with the revived beings. When Azell's sword cut Jackal, the white flame trailed the arc of the sword strike as it burned his body.

<Kahhhhhhk!>

Jackal let out a horrifying scream.

When half of his body was sliced off by Azell's sword strike, Jackal hadn't felt any pain. It was a strike imbued with magical energy, so there was damage to physical body, and a little bit of damage to his astral body. Still, unlike a living person, his body wasn't paralyzed from the pain.

However, this instance was different. The white flame stuck to his astral body like glue, and it was sending an enormous amount of pain to his soul.

Azell spoke.

“If one still have a lot of one's body left, the deep-seated grudge is too strong to burn easily. However, I found out that beings like you will burn very well after you are finely chopped.”

There was a reason why he used a normal attack for his first strike. First, he had to cut the body into pieces before the 'Star's Breath' could be used in an efficient manner.

The revived being was maintained by negative energies, and the Star's Breath was a technique that attacked the energy itself.

If the high ranked revived being was whole, one had to pour out an overwhelming force or it would use its high resistance to hold out against the attack. However, the resistance decreased by a significant amount when the body was cut into pieces.

“You tried hard to live again. However, you had the honor of speaking several words in front of me, so let go of your lingering attachment and go back to sleep.”

Azell mocked Jackal’s grudge towards him as he struck with sword. The fearsome sword strike flew toward Jackal’s body. It cut Jackal’s body once then a white flame trailed after him.

Kwahhhhhhhh!

The white flame stuck to Jackal’s body, and it engulfed his corrupted existence.

<This... this can’t be.....! This was all for nothing... Gyahhhhhhhhk!>

The dead spirit’s blood curdling scream rang out.

The white flame called Star’s Breath didn’t give out any heat, but in a moment, it lit up the surrounding like daylight.

Azell controlled the flame as he looked toward a particular direction.

“Recycling is a good thing. Still, I can’t give you praise for reviving a dead being to use as troop. Well, he was quite useless due to his impatient personality.”

Most revived beings had explosive tempers. It couldn’t be helped since they exceeded the limits of their bodies, and by their own choice, they revived into being a undead. Moreover, most of them had experienced themselves ‘being killed’.

Black magic was used to raise the revived being and it amplified the dark emotions within the dead person. It turned the dark emotions into an evil energy. If one held a grudge from being killed, the grudge was amplified into a berserk state.

Azell knew about this phenomena. This was why he was able to easily defeat Jackal.

“You are more heartless than I thought.”

From across the darkness, he heard the calm voice of a woman. Then her oppressive presence started to spread.

Arrieta swallowed her gasp.

‘This power... It is on par with my teacher!’

The woman with the long black hair was floating in mid-air. The

magical wave she was emitting was oppressive. Giles, Boar and even Arrieta was overwhelmed by her.

‘How could such a young human woman possess this much power?’

Humans and Dragon Demon race had less magical potential compared to Dragon Demons, but those who reach the pinnacle surpass such limitations. Still, how could someone so young reach such heights?

# Chapter 38 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (3)

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Amongst the party, Azell was the only one who wasn't intimidated. He asked a question towards the black haired woman with a confused expression on his face.

“Why are you wasting your mental power in disguising yourself as a human? Do you hold some attachment to looking like a human?”

“...what are you saying, Sir Azell?”

Arrieta was surprised, so she looked at Azell. However, Azell didn't answer her. He just stared at the black haired woman.

The black haired woman also showed a hint of surprise.

“That is surprising. You are the first human to see through my disguise.”

“It seems you haven't met that many humans before... Is my guess wrong?”

“Hoo hoo. I heard you are a genius in getting on other people's nerves. I guess they were right.”

“Don't think of it as a compliment, you of the Dragon Demon

race.”

“Dragon Demon race?”

Arrieta was surprised. As if she couldn't believe it, Arrieta looked at the black haired woman. No matter how much she looked at her she only possessed a strong magical energy. She didn't feel any Dragon Demon magic emanating from her.

However, Azell was sure the enemy was disguising her looks.

Azell had trained his Dragon Demon Magic through the Dragon Slayer's ritual, and in the process of training his Dragon Demon Magic, he had attained the 'Eye of Truth'. He was able to see through every illusions.

‘Since it is still working, the technique hasn't disappeared even if I lost my Dragon Demon Magic.’

The 'Eye of Truth' wasn't a special ability. It was a state one could also reach through Spirit Order. Even if one didn't train in Dragon Demon Magic, one could train and pursue the Absolute Sense to achieve this technique. Of course, once one reaches this stage, it wouldn't just disappear.

She spoke.

“My name is Niberis.”



At the same time, her appearance started to go through a change.

Two black horns grew on top of her ears. Like Arrieta's horns, it looked like an item crafted from glass. However, her two horns curved towards the sky, and it looked menacing. Moreover, her ears were much longer and pointier than a Dragon Demon. On the back of her hand, a red Dragon Demon stone emitting a bright light appeared.

That was it. Dragon Demons and human weren't that different in appearance. This was the same for those from the Dragon Demon race. However, one could tell at a glance that she wasn't human.

At the same time, the feel of the magical wave completely changed.

It was a power that could control the reality through one's will. It was the Dragon Demon magic.

“You, whose name is seeped in sin, should be honored at hearing my name. As you enter the road into the after-life, this is my present to you, but it is probably too expensive of a gift for you.”

“Ho-oh.”

Azell's eyebrows lifted.

“It really drives home the fact that I’ve met someone from the Dragon Demon race when I listen to your rude words.”

“Hoo hoo. You have experience fighting someone of the Dragon Demon race? Well, just by looking at how you speak, you probably are experienced at running away in fright.....”

“I’m experienced in killing them.”

Niberis closed her mouth when Azell spoke in an indifferent manner. She furrowed her eyebrows.

“You are a worthless sinner yet you have a big mouth.”

“Well, I don’t care if you believe me or not. No, I insist you don’t. Just keep thinking I’m lying. You can come to your senses after you die.”

“Hoot.”

Niberis laughed. However, her anger was contained within it.

Kwa-roo-roong! Kwa-roong!

In the next moment, lightning struck. The blue lightning strike poured towards Azell, and a cloud of dust rose into the air.

Arrieta was dismayed.

‘Too fast!’

No spells were used. Moreover, she barely showed signs of using magic, so she couldn’t even properly detect it.

So how was she able to use such a strong magic?

However, something more surprising happened in the next moment.

“Kee-ehhhhhhk!”

“Koo-ahhhk!”

The screams rang out from close by?

Arrieta looked around in surprise. Before she knew it, Azell had traveled across the darkness, and he was already within the midst of the monster, who were maintaining the perimeter. No one had thought he would ambush them like this, so the monster fell in droves.

Niberis raged.

“You dare ignore me!”

Azell didn't even answer her. He used his Instantaneous movement to crisscross the terrified monsters as he delivered deathblows!

From the darkness, he appeared like a faintly visible ghost. One could see his afterimage as he repeatedly appeared and disappeared. Before his after image disappeared, the monsters' blood flew into the air. The monsters collapsed as if they were drowning from the beads of blood raining down on them.

Niberis raged at his attitude. He had completely ignored her.

"How dare you!"

She casted her magic. At a glance, one could tell it was a powerful magic.

"You, who aren't affiliated with the darkness, should die."

The ground lightly shook, then a wave of darkness started to spread. It was a powerful curse aimed towards a person that fulfills a specific condition. This allowed one to kill only one's target when enemies and allies were all mixed together in a jumble. The spreading wave of darkness stopped expanding at a certain point, then it quickly converged on a single point. Of course, its target was Azell.

Arrieta shouted out a warning.

“Look out!”

At the same time, she activated her Dragon Demon Magic and she tried to cut the wave of curse closing the distance towards Azell. However, Niberis’ attack ignored her attack as if it was a hallucination.

“You are a Dragon Demon, who doesn’t know about the true strength of magic. Yet you dare point your dirty sword towards me?”

Niberis taunted Arrieta.

At the same time, Azell snorted.

“This is it?”

Pooh-hwahhhhhk!

From within the darkness, a gruesome sound of destruction rang out. Seven fountain of blood shot into the air, and seven monsters fell as they lost their lives.

The curse struck and exploded on the culprit, who was causing death.

Ooh-oong.....

However, nothing happened.

Niberis was dismayed.

“What?”

She didn't make a mistake. Her curse was perfect.

It was a magic she had used to kill many high level Spirit Order practitioner up until now!

Azell looked up at her with indifferent eyes.

“Look here. For a change, I thought I had come across the real deal. However, it seems I have come across a cub, who learned a little bit of technique. You were being so overbearing with only this much skill?”

“What... did you say?”

Niberis' voice shook from anger.

She had never been ignored all her life. At the Plains of Darkness, every one of her instructors praised her as a genius, and she had easily dispatched any humans or Dragon Demons she had come across on her missions. Yet a mere human, whose magic didn't look too strong, was ignoring her!

She was about to attack on an impulse, but Niberis stopped herself.

‘What method did he use?’

Even though she was considered young amongst the Dragon Demon race, she was still a high level magician with a good deal of battle experience under her belt. She used her powerful self-control to reign in her impulse then she used her cold judgement.

‘It is a method I have yet to come across. However... If he was a high ranked Spirit Order practitioner, then he probably has techniques that could rival great magical spells.’

Spirit Order practitioners were basically warriors. It was easy to see them as simple brutes, but their techniques focused on their mind and senses instead of the physical body. This is why their techniques were as diverse and profound as magic.

After she regained her countenance, Niberis spoke.

“...it is as Regina had said. I cannot tell where the floor is with this man.”

“I thought you would give into your impulse and go on a rampage. It seems you aren’t too green, Miss.”

“If one meets an enemy one can’t comprehend.... One has to get a taste of them first.”

Niberis spoke.

When she raised her hand, the darkness vibrated.

Woowoowoowoowo.....!

Azell clicked his tongue when he saw this.

‘Chet. Was I too obvious? I mad a mistake.’

He had made a mistake. He wanted Niberis to get angry, so she would show her weakness. At the same time, he wanted to decrease the number of monsters, so he attacked them. However, his avoidance of the curse magic caught her attention, and now it much have awakened her sense of caution.

The barrier technique Azell had used was simple. Niberis’ technique destroyed those ‘who aren’t affiliated with darkness’. He materialized Darkness energy, and he surrounded himself with it.

Of course, it sounded simple, but it wasn’t a technique anyone could do. During the Dragon Demon war, he learned how to materialize his magical energy into magic. Then he had learned a technique that was capable of changing the attribute of the magic to anything he wanted.



‘If she found out how I did it, it wouldn’t be a problem... This is getting dangerous. I should be fine, but the others....’

He continued to make fun of her, but Niberis wasn’t an easy opponent. She had cut them off from the outside for a radius of several hundred meters. She had created a magical domain only she could use. Even if she had prepared this beforehand, this required a massive amount of magical energy. However, he couldn’t see any signs of strain from her.

At that moment, Niberis spoke the words he had been worried about.

“Go block the man with the name soaked in sin. I’ll capture the Dragon Demon princess first.”

Then Niberis flicked her fingers.

“He might be too much for you all, so I’ll give you a helper.”

A dense evil energy that made one’s blood freeze swept across the floor. Then it started gathering the dead corpses of the monsters in one location.

When he saw this, Azell’s eyes widened.

‘Maybe this is.....’

It was as he feared.

The corpses were dragged into the center, and a ripple of purple light was expelled. Then a swamp of darkness appeared.

The color of the swamp was something that couldn't exist naturally in this world. The corpse of the monsters continued to be dragged within, and they became part of the swamp.

Googoogoogoogo.....

As the ground shook, a figure of a giant started rising up from inside the swamp. It was made out of pitch black darkness, but a purple colored flame burned across its entire body. It was a bizarre being. The awareness of this unrealistic difference made one feel extremely repulsed. It made one's chest feel uncomfortable.

“You raised a corrupted being. It seems you are a pretty accomplished black magician.”

Azell tensed.

This was a Great Magic even a high level black magicians couldn't easily use.

He guessed she had prepared the spell beforehand for a situation like this. Still, if one wanted use it as easily as Niberis, one had to

possess a massive amount of magic, and the quality of the magician casting it had to be very high.

The pain and regret left by the dead, and the corrupted energy created by death was used as foundation to dissolve the bodies. Then a black magic construct, a corrupted being, was raised.

This world wouldn't tolerate such a corrupted being, so it could only exist for a limited time inside the darkness. Of course, this meant its strength was superb.

Niberis put on a cold smile.

“It seems you have a little bit of a discerning eye. You are not worthy of being shown a magic like this.”

Gwuhhhhhhhhhhh!!

The corrupted being had a silhouette of a giant, and it let out a cry. The sound carrying the rough vibration attacked everyone standing on the earth. It didn't discriminate between allies and enemies. In a flash, everyone's movements were paralyzed.

Niberis spoke.

“Hmmm. I forgot about that detail.”

Niberis saw her allies frozen in place, so she added additional

magic to it. This caused the corrupted being's roar to only target Azell's party.

Azell was amazed.

‘It seems she isn't normal?’

Niberis easily fixed the problem as if she had forgotten something minor. However, she had used a very advanced magic. She took the ‘sound’ attack, and it was modified to be able to discern between her allies and enemies!

Googoogoogoogo.....!

Then the corrupted being started moving towards Azell. Even though it was over 3 meters tall, it moved creepily towards him as if it was sliding across ice.

# Chapter 39 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (4)

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When Niberis saw the corrupted being and her underlings running towards Azell, she turned her back on him.

“Well, now.....”

Pah-ji-ji-jeeek!

Arrieta swung her sword down towards her. A barrier formed automatically, and blue sparks flew as it clashed with the white sword. Arrieta didn't hesitate to charge her when she had judged Niberis had put her guard down.

“Oh Evil Darkness, Rend Apart!”

Arrieta had used the repelling force to retreat as she swung her sword. Then a sword made out of light struck towards Niberis.

However, Niberis didn't show any signs of nervousness. As if she was on a leisurely stroll, she walked across the air then she slightly shook her hand. This resulted in Arrieta's sword of light sliding off of her barrier, and it collapsed in the air.

Arrieta was taken aback.

‘She was able to slip my attack so easily!’

Niberis' attack followed afterwards. Arrow made out of light formed in mid-air, and it was shot towards Arrieta in a dizzying manner.

“Sacred Valor bless this sword!”

With a shout, a barrier formed and it blocked the light. However, a sound of an explosion was heard from behind.

Kwang! Kwa-gahng!

The projectiles exploded, and it blew Arrieta away. Arrieta was thrown towards the ground, and she was barely able to turn her body to kick the ground. She looked like a skipping stone as she kicked, rotated, kicked again and so on. Niberis smiled as she looked at her.

“Hoo-hoot. You are a princess of a country, but you are floundering about like a street performer.”

At the same time, she lightly shook her hand. This caused two sphere of light to form, and it head towards another direction.

Kwah-ahh-ahhng!

“Kook....!”

Boar let out a moan as he blocked with his shield. This was an attack aimed at the other party member, who were separated from Arrieta.

Niberis spoke.

“My workload is too much for me to deal with bugs like you.”

“What did you say?”

Boar became angry.

Niberis no longer looked towards him. Instead, the remaining monsters rushed towards him.

“Sir Giles!”

“I already know!”

The two knights stood up as they looked at each other.

During all of this, Enora had been shaking in terror.

Boar assessed his surrounding as he spoke.

“Don’t worry, Ms Enora! Not even a single hair of yours will be hurt as long as I’m around!”

“You stole what I wanted to say. Let’s quickly get rid of these filthy bastards then we can help the princess!”

Giles also spoke in a noble manner. However, several dozen monsters ran towards them.

“There are a lot of them!”

Giles’ sword energy was swung towards the approaching enemies like a gale. The sword energy was fast yet delicate. It cut down the unruly monsters one by one.

There were most definitely a lot of enemies. Most of them were larger and sturdier than humans.

However, the Spirit Order practitioners who had reached the level of Quadruple master were super humans.

They could cow them with their mental wave, and they used an electric-like attack to take the monster’s lives. They put fear into the monsters.

Confusion and hesitation started to spread within the ranks of the monsters. Giles had faced large numbers of monsters in the Balan Forest, so he was used to facing off against such opponents.

Boar also wasn’t outdone by Giles.



“Hoong! Dirty bastards! I guess you are desperate to dirty my shield with your blood!”

Boar had a shield, so the way he faced off against the monsters were entirely different from Giles.

Too-hahk!

A group of orcs were running toward him. Boar smashed the lead orc with his shield, and it flew into the air. It looked like it was hit by a running horse. The orc’s muscular body was much bigger than a human, but it flew several meters into the air. It flew over the head of the monsters.

While the monsters were frozen watching the orc fly, Boar stabbed his sword over his shield. Another monster’s throat was pierced like meat being skewered, and it fell to the floor.

The flustered monsters ran towards Boar in unison, and they swung their weapons. Three of them ran in at Boar.

Boar glared with his eyes.

“Ha-ahhhhhhhh!”

Instead of yelling like a person, he roared out a bestial cry. It was similar to what Azell had used. It was a roar containing a

domineering mental wave.

In a flash, the monsters' movements slowed. As he blocked the discouraged enemies' attack with his shield, Boar stomped with all his might.

Booom!

Accompanying a heavy thud, the ground started to shake. The weapons swung by the monsters were deflected with great force, and the owners of the weapons fell to the floor.

“Ha-ah!”

Boar quickly ran in, and he cut them down with his sword. Then he returned to guard his original position.

Giles and Boar look at each other with sidelong glances after they killed a batch of enemies.

The two of them didn't get along. From the start of the trip, Boar treated Giles like a country knight, and Boar had ignored him.

They got on each other's nerves at every step, and they had fought each other for the leadership role.

After Boar was annihilated by Azell, his attitude had changed. However, the relationship between Giles and Boar was still

uncomfortable. Both of young knights were chosen as representative for their respective group, so this situation was inevitable.

“Sir Giles. How about we compete to see who could take down the most opponents?”

“I’ll take you up on that..”

However, at that moment, the two of them agreed on something. They had to protect Enora, and they had to help Arrieta. This was why they didn’t hesitate to fight with their backs against each other. Even though their movements were restricted from being surrounded by several dozen monsters, the two knights were in a difficult ordeal where they had to defeat all the monsters.

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Currently, everything was going as the Dragon’s Shadow had intended.

Their target was Arrieta. She had been separated from Azell, who they were wary of, and the 3 others. If one discounted Azell, the several dozen monsters were surrounding Giles, Boar and Enora. They were in a significant danger.

However, Arrieta couldn’t help them. Niberis was walking towards her emitting an oppressive magical energy.

“Well, we’ve finally broken free from the disrupters.... Dragon

Princess. We share the same blood, so I will show you some mercy. I have a proposal for you.”

“A proposal?”

“If you obediently follow us, I’ll spare your underling’s lives..”

“What?”

“I’m telling you to surrender. It’s obvious what the result will be, so let’s not tire each other out.”

“Bullshit!”

Arrieta kicked off the ground. She accelerated using her instantaneous movement, and in a flash, she had arrived at Niberis’ back. Then she didn’t hesitate to attack!

However, Niberis was gone. Arrieta was surprised when she felt herself strike empty air.

From her side, she heard Niberis’ languid voice.

“All those who wield swords are uniformly simple.”

‘Illusion?’

Niberis had predicted what Arrieta would do, so she had used set up an illusion. Niberis' skill in magic was too fast and complex. Arrieta didn't even realize what she had done.

Boom!

Arrieta was struck by lightning, and she was sent flying. Arrieta was barely able to right her body and land on the ground. Niberis spoke as she looked at her.

"This is the second time. The rumors said you are intelligent. So isn't it about time you realize your place?"

"Kook.....!"

"Well, it's ok. If you want to be stubborn, I'll break that stubbornness. I'll make realize the reality of your situation."

When Niberis said, 'This is the second time.', it was the number of times Niberis could have taken Arrieta's life. She aimed to capture Arrieta alive, so even though she had the chance to deal a critical blow, she had refrained.

Arrieta shouted.

"Don't look down on me! You of the Dragon Demon race! Light of the Ferocious Beast that Burns away the Darkness, Roar!"

An orange flame climbed up the white blade. Unlike a normal flame, it wasn't emitting a lot of heat. However, this was a magical flame with a massive amount of destructive force dormant within its magical flame.

“Go!”

When she swung her sword, the fire elongated like a whip, and it struck against Niberis.

This wasn't a one-off move. Arrieta breathed in, then she let out a couple dozen malleable sword energy. It created a dizzying white trace across the empty air, and it hit Niberis.

Hwahhhhhhk!

The flame exploded on impact. From where the attack ignited to behind several dozen meter, explosive flames spread out in a fan shape.

She proved that her reputation as the Dragon Demon princess wasn't false. She displayed a devastating power. It was an attack capable of killing dozens of enemy in a flash. However, Arrieta wasn't done yet. She brought her sword down as she ran.

“Oh fire dragon. Let out your anger!”

The orange flames surrounding the sword started to emit heat, and it changed into a real flame. Arrieta's fierce sword strike was

able to split even a castle wall.

“...aren’t you satisfied after squirming this much?

In the next moment, a languid voice entered into Arrieta’s ear.

Boom!

At the same time, Arrieta was struck from the side with no warning. Arrieta couldn’t even scream as she was thrown to the ground.

In front of her, Niberis was walking out of the fiercely burning magical flame. Not even a single hair was damaged.

After rolling several times on the ground, Arrieta gritted her teeth as she got up.

‘I guess it was another illusion.’

Niberis was walking from a location entirely different from where Arrieta had predicted. This time she had been prepared for Niberis to use her illusion magic. However, she had still been completely fooled.

“Pitiful.”

Niberis words held pity within it. However, the voice didn't come out of the Niberis walking out from the flame.

‘Multiple illusion?’

Arrieta's eyes widened.

Niberis was walking towards her from all direction. There were a total of 7 Niberis, and all of them looked like the real body.

Moreover, there was a strong magical wave that was interfering with Arrieta's senses. Even if she tried to sense Niberis' life energy, she couldn't tell which one was the real one.

Niberis spoke.

“If you come obediently, then everything will be easier.”

As if her words were a spell, consecutive lightning strikes exploded forth. The lightning strikes exploded as it ripped through the darkness. Arrieta mindlessly ran away.

‘I can't read the signs!’

When a warrior fights against a magician, the warrior reads the flow of the magical energy. Once the warrior sees the sign that magic is being used, one could react to the magic. Even if one couldn't tell what kind of magic it was, one could still block it if



one knew when the magic was coming.

However, Niberis didn't have a tell in her magic. It seemed like she wasn't doing anything when the lightning struck.

‘This basically means... That woman is just playing with me.’

One after another she was hit with lightning that was powerful enough to instantly kill a normal person. However, Niberis was just flicking her finger as if she was barely putting her strength into the attack. Even if one possessed powerful magical strength, one still needed an effective techniques to use. She hadn't even gathered her power in one place to amplify her magic. She had omitted steps yet she was able to produce this much power.

Niberis spoke.

“Your defense is pretty admirable. I heard you were taught by the Dragon Demon Duke. It seems he taught you well.”

“You know my teacher?”

“I've never personally seen him. However, I've heard about his reputation enough times to make my ears bleed. Now that I see his student I could tell your teacher has great skill.”

Niberis genuinely gave a compliment to Arrieta's skills.

Of course, this was a judgement made by a person who was in a much superior position. It was like saying, 'She's better than I thought?'

Niberis continued to use lightning to incapacitate Arrieta. Normally, even if you block the lightning itself, the clap of the thunder damages ones eardrum. It'll be impossible for the person to move properly. afterward

Arrieta had been worried about this, so she had used her Dragon energy to protect her eardrums from the beginning. Even if the lightning didn't incapacitate her, a single damaged eardrum would make her lose her fighting capability.

'I can't win against this enemy with just my strength.'

Arrieta coldly calculated her chances.

# Chapter 40 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (5)

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She came to a conclusion. She determined she had no chance of winning against Niberis no matter how much she struggled. The difference between their power was too overwhelming.

She could see only one way out. It was Niberis' attitude. She knew Niberis wasn't paying much attention to her. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to do anything with this fact.

'She is taking me lightly, but she isn't careless about protecting herself....'

Niberis' inattention resulted from her trust in her own defensive ability. Even if Arrieta was better than Niberis had predicted, she couldn't break through the barrier even if she caught Niberis off guard. This caused the magician to be arrogant.

Unfortunately, Arrieta didn't have the strength to tear down her arrogance. If she used all her power to deliver a fatal blow, then it might be possible. However, Niberis' carelessness didn't mean she would allow Arrieta to prepare her strike.

'I won't be able to escape.'

The enemy's aim was to kidnap her, so running away was the best way to go. However, she was surrounded by a barrier of darkness, and it wouldn't allow her to escape.

‘I guess I’ll have to hold out by taking advantage of the enemy’s indifferent attitude.’

Arrieta decided to trust her allies. If she was able to stall for time, then Azell would surely do something.

Arrieta laughed bitterly at her thoughts.

‘When did I start to.....’

When did she start to rely on Azell so much? She had no idea. At this moment, she felt more secure by the fact that Azell was fighting in this battlefield. She’d prefer him over a thousand troops supporting her.

Niberis raised her hand when she saw Arrieta’s relentless determination.

“You are foolish to continue this fight when the result is a foregone conclusion. It’ll just make both of us weary.”

“Your arrogance can’t last forever, Dragon Demon.”

“It isn’t arrogance.”

After she spoke coldly, a dark flame-like darkness surged forth, and it surrounded Niberis’ vicinity. She spoke as half of her figure

was cloaked in darkness.

“I’m just speaking the truth.”

Azell frowned as he saw the corrupted being approach him.

‘This is going to be a pain in the ass. That thing is annoying.’

Azell had plenty experience in fighting against a corrupted being. It was an oft used method by the high level Black magicians in the Dragon Demon War. The magic didn’t differentiate between allies or enemies when it gathered the corpses into one place. Usually, it would also cause massive damage to the allies when the corrupted being was born.

Of course, the corrupted being wasn’t a scary opponent for Azell. The problem was this opponent was annoying enough to delay him.

‘I have no choice.’

Azell calmly took a single deep breath.

Ba-dump!

His heart beat faster.

Oooooohhhhg.....

The Rings of Life resonated, and his magic amplified.

The magic flowing in his energy pulse accelerated, and it flowed into the Rings of Life. Then the magic amplified as it passed through the first Ring, then it amplified again after passing through the second Ring. As the magic passed through the final third ring, it was amplified more and more. Before it could go back into energy pulse, pulsation of the blood vessels and small vibrations of the bones added fuel to amplification. Then the magic amplified to its maximum point.

Ba-dump! Ba-dump! Ba-dump!

His heartbeat raced faster, and the flow of magic in his energy pulse accelerated more and more. Every time the magic passed his heart, the magical energy expanded more and more. It filled up his energy pulse, and as if that wasn't enough, the magic spread to every part of his body. Still, the magic was overflowing, so it started wrapping around his body.

Hoo-ooooooh.....!

This process happened in an instant. Before the enemies under orders could attack him, and before the corrupted being got in range for an attack, Azell had already finished amplifying his magical energy.

He could freely control the beat of his heart. He could control each blood vessels in his body. This allowed the Spirit Order practitioner to perceive time differently from a normal person. The Spirit Order practitioner could slow down or speed up the perception of time one feels. At his moment, he was stretching out the time to the extremes.

“Good.”

Azell mumbled in a small voice.

His body was far from being complete. The vessel that held his magical energy was too small. If Azell compared himself to his prime, the amount of magic he could hold didn't even reach 10 percent.

However, it was enough to deal with this situation. The reason being Azell knew of a method where he could temporarily control the overflowing magical energy. He wrapped it around his body.

Azell had the time to amplify his magic in a relaxed state, and now his enemies would feel a different level of power from him.

Gwauhhhhhhhhh!

The corrupted being ran towards him. Just by looking at its size one could guess how strong it was. Its strength probably exceeded that of an ogre by a wide margin.

This wasn't the end of it. The corrupted being was a crystallization of a curse, so anything it touched was deadly to any being in this world.

Azell dodged the corrupted being's hand, and he retreated backwards. At the same time, he tilted his head by a marginal amount.

Shweeek!

Suddenly, a black blade burst out of the ground, and it barely missed the side of his face.

It didn't end there. The blank blades continuously burst forth from the ground, and it tried to skewer him.

Azell moved as if he was dancing, and he was able to avoid all of it. At the same time he came to a stop, he stomped hard on the ground.

Kooooooooong!

It looked like a light stomp, but the surrounding surface shook in its entirety.

“Koo-uhk.....!”

Azell's senses were developed to the extreme, so he heard the



moan let out by someone 5 meters below the surface. It was the sound of Kirion, who attacked his enemies as he moved freely through the ground.

The vibrational energy caused by the stomp was transferred through the earth, and it had attacked Kirion. Azell wanted to send an additional blow to end Kirion, but he didn't have the time to do so. In that brief moment, the corrupted being had closed the distance, and it was swinging its arm.

‘Claws of the Thunder Dragon!’

Azell let fly his sword strike on a similar trajectory as the other's attack.

Kwa-roo-roong! Kwa-gwang!

The sound of thunder overlapped with the sound of Niberis attacking Arrieta. Azell's sword was emitting thunder strikes, and it ripped apart the corrupted giant's arm.

At the unexpected sound of thunder, the enemies who were approaching Azell for an attack flinched. Azell moved using his Instantaneous Movement method, and it left his after image.

Pahhhhhng!

The sword strike let out a blue light as it made a long gash on the corrupted being's back. The aggregate of corrupted power making

up the body dispersed as it fragmented off.

“It’s really sturdy. Annoying.”

Azell grumbled. Then he reversed the additional blow he was going to send with his sword, and he stabbed towards his back.

Boom!

“Kyahhhk!”

Accompanying an explosive sound, a sharp cry rang out. It was a feminine scream, but the voice was very hoarse. It sounded very odd.

“Your scream is unexpectedly quite feminine? Ms. Regina.”

“Ooh-ook.....”

Regina moaned. She had used her Stealth technique to hide herself. She had even used it to hide her life energy, so she had thought this would be the perfect time to attack him. However, Azell had become aware of her ghost-like figure, and he had counterattacked.

Azell grinned as he pressed his attack on Regina. Transparent blades of force flew towards him in the air. Azell deflected it, and he suddenly retreated backwards. At the same time, he tilted his

body towards the ground, then he let fly a sword strike at a very odd angle.

Pah-hahk!

“Koo-uhk!”

Kirion, who was about to burst through the surface, let out a yell. While Azell was focused on Regina, Kirion had decided to ambush Azell.

However, Azell had cut Kirion as if he had been waiting for that exact opportunity.

“What...what the.....!”

Kirion watched a fountain of blood burst forth from his body, and he moaned. He still had the wound on his face left by Azell. Kirion's eyes were burning with anger.

“Azell Zestring, you son of a bitch.....!”

Before Azell could reply, Kirion disappeared from sight. Afterwards, a sphere of darkness crashed into the spot. In a flash, Azell moved a distance over 10 meters as he spoke.

“You are trying to detain me with this? Your superiors have a very bad grip on reality.”

Azell was surrounded by 4 enemies.

The cursed being, Regina, and Kirion surrounded him. Moreover, a black magician Azell had never seen before was hiding inside the darkness. He was the one who had shot the sphere of darkness.

“Koo-ook, oooooooooh.....!”

Kirion was severely injured, and he was swaying. He had stopped the bleeding for now, but he was in a poor shape. He had tried an ambush yet he received a counterattack instead.

Azell's eyes shone with a terrifying light.

“I don't have time to play with you. I'll take care of you quickly.”

His magical energy were overflowing from his body, and he would use it to defeat his enemies quickly. He was emitting far greater power than normal, so it was a big burden on his body. Moreover, it quickly exhausted his mental power, so he couldn't maintain this state for a long time.

In the next moment, Azell disappeared.

‘What?’

Regina was taken aback.

That wasn't it. She had thought he used the Instantaneous Movement to disappear. She was preparing for a strike from the back, when he appeared once again.

However, there were more than one. One appeared behind the corrupted being. Another one appeared in front of Regina. One was next to Kirion, and last one was behind the black magician!

‘A cloning technique?’

Even the Dragon Demon with enhanced senses couldn't tell the difference between the real body, and the false image. At that moment, every one of them looked like a false image.

“Are you perhaps making the mistake in thinking I'm hiding somewhere?”

Azell spoke as he appeared behind the black magician. The black magician was terrified as he realized his back was taken and he was a beat too late.

“Heeeeek!”

He reflexively activated his defensive magic. At the same time, the corrupted being and Regina headed towards them.

‘That's the real one!’

When she was about to open her mouth, the false images disappeared as the presence of Azell came into focus. How was he able to find the hidden black magician so easily? And Azell was attacking him first! Even as she used her instantaneous movement, she knew her last ditch effort would be too late.

“Koooh-ahhhhk!”

However, she froze when she heard a scream from behind.

‘How?’

Azell was attacking the black magician, so why was Kirion screaming?

Kirion, who was seriously injured, tried to hide himself again below ground when Azell moved. He had lost too much of his composure from receiving the large wound. He won’t be able to attack again

At that moment, Azell grabbed his throat then he stabbed him through the heart.

“Kuk, Kuh-uh-uhk... This cant be.....!”

Kirion’s eyes widened in disbelief as he took his last breath. Azell confirmed that Kirion wasn’t breathing. Azell threw him away.

“This method works well against those who are confident in their senses.”

He divided his life signature of his main body, and he had made several clones. Only one of the clones would hold a life signature akin to his real body. His enemies didn't have the time to evaluate his clones properly, so they had mistaken the clone for the actual body.

When the enemies' focused their attention on the bait, Azell's real body attacked the weak-link. He killed Kirion.

“Also, I'm not done yet.”

“What?”

At Azell's meaningful words, Regina couldn't help but turn around to look.

ooh-ook!

The inattentive black magician was pierced by a sword that burst forth from below.

“Kuh-uhk. How could this be.....!”

The black magician was horrified.

Ddah-ahk!

Azell flicked his fingers. The sword that was lodged inside the black magician's body started to spread a destructive energy, and it destroyed the black magician's heart. The black magician breathed his last breath before he could even scream.

Azell had layered another trap on top of the first one. He attacked from the back after making them believe his real body was elsewhere. After his first trap ended, he activated his second trap while everyone had let their guard down.

Azell shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm thankful since you guys keep falling for the same trick."

The second trap was a variation on the method he used in the Balan Forest. Azell had stolen a sword from a monster as he took killed the monsters. He used his Stealth technique to hide it, and he carried it around in such a way where so no one would suspect he had it. Then he used this opportunity to throw the sword.

The difference between the last time he used it and now was the fact that Azell was able to move the thrown item in a more complex manner.

The enemies were distracted by his clones, and before they could react to the fact that they had been duped... The hidden sword was



sent flying low to the ground. He abruptly accelerated the sword, and it was thrust up and in to the black magician.

“Except for the lady from the Dragon Demon race, all of you are simpletons. Why don’t you challenge me after studying a little bit more?”

Regina trembled when she witnessed the frightening sight. She couldn’t suppress her terror as it started to well up.

‘What exactly is this man’s identity?’

# Chapter 41 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (6)

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As she worked as a member of the Dragon's Shadow, she had fought and killed a lot of humans. She also had plenty experience fighting against Spirit Order practitioners.

However, amongst them, no one fought like Azell.

Of course, this was the case. The run of the mill Spirit Order practitioners wouldn't be able to imitate the techniques devised by Azell. Azell had once reach the pinnacle level, so he could use such unreasonable technical skills.

'I can't win against him.....'

The certainty of defeat ruled over her.

If he showed an overwhelming strength, then it would have been easier for her to swallow this defeat. However, Azell used sophisticated techniques, and deceptive tricks to make surprise attacks. Her allies with great power were cut down so easily that it was absurd. She couldn't comprehend what was happening, and this created a fear inside her.

'Should I run away?'

However, she wasn't allowed to do so. She had to stall until

Niberis captured the Dragon Demon Princess....

She started to retreat haltingly when Azell suddenly appeared in front of Regina. The moment he sensed her agitation, he immediately used his Instantaneous Movement to charge after her.

Kah-ahng!

Sword hit against sword as sparks flew. Her balance was broken, but Azell pulled back from striking a critical blow. The reason being the corrupted being had ran in at that moment. Regina stabbed with her sword towards Azell in an almost reflexive manner. The enemy in front of her hesitated in attacking her, and her ally was attacking from Azell's rear. She had thought it would be the best chance for her to attack.

However, Regina soon realized she had fallen into a trap.

‘This was also planned by this person!’

Azell had a cold smile on his face.

The moment she started her attack his figure disappeared as if he had been waiting for this moment. He had prepared his movement technique as if he had been waiting for her move. He activated it with exquisite timing where she couldn't pull pack her attack.

Regina's field of vision was swallowed by the corrupted being's enormous body. Then....

Kwaaahhhhhhh!

Azell appeared behind the corrupted being and his fierce strike exploded. The lightning flash sliced and ripped into the corrupted being's large body. Regina, who was on the other side of the body, was also swept up in the attack.

‘We were dancing on top of his palms from beginning to the end. Even one from the Dragon Demon race won't be able to face.....’

Regina, who had fallen into despair, couldn't continue her thoughts. The exquisite pain swirling around her entire body made her lose her consciousness.

## 6

Niberis furrowed her brows.

“She's really tenacious..”

In front of her, Arrieta was covered in dirt, and she was breathing raggedly.

Arrieta couldn't even harm a single hair on Niberis. She was busy focusing only on defense.

It was impossible for her to run away. Niberis used a delicate magical fog to prevent Arrieta from escaping a certain area. Her movements were being restricted.

Unlike her calm exterior, Niberis wasn't as relaxed inside.

'I never expected this mission to turn out to be this annoying.'

If she wanted to kill Arrieta, this would have already ended. The problem was the goal of her mission. She had to capture the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta, while causing minimal damage to her.

She couldn't cause damage that couldn't be healed. She had to catch Arrieta intact, and it was a really tricky proposition. It would have been easier for her if she could use a curse or a binding magic to subdue Arrieta. However, Arrieta's skills were outstanding. Niberis had no choice but to send lukewarm attacks to methodically cut down her stamina.

She smiled when she saw Arrieta pant.

"Is this the end.....?"

Anyone could tell by looking at Arrieta that she was refusing to yield.

Niberis didn't get angry. Instead, she let out a sigh.

“If my underlings were a little bit more useful, then this assignment could have been done more easily.”

“What.....?”

It happened when Arrieta was puzzling over Niberis’ words.

Pah-jee-jee-jeeek!

A blue flame sparked in front of Niberis’ eyes. Before she knew it, Azell had approached her from the front, and he had brought down his sword.

Niberis spoke.

“You are a troublesome person like the report indicated.”

Azell whistled as he pressed against her barrier.

“I guess you aren’t dumb like your underlings?”

Niberis’ barrier hadn’t activated from conscious command right now. She had prepared for a scenario where she would be ambushed. The barrier magic was prepared in a way where it would activate when certain conditions were met.

From the moment Niberis' barrier activated, the magical pattern was changing fluidly. She used the magical alignment to negate, and cut off the backlash.

Niberis spoke.

“You with the name seeped in sin.....”

“Why don't you just call me Azell? Isn't it annoying to use such a long name, Niberis Ahjoommah?”

“What did you say?”

When Niberis heard the word 'Ahjoommah', her eyebrows rose.

Kwa-gwang!

At the same time, a lightning strike exploded atop the barrier. It let out a bright light into the surrounding, and it felt like the white light could sear the eyes in an instant. Afterwards, the thunderclap shook the surrounding.

Niberis was taken aback.

‘He's unscathed?!’

Her thunder strike had the power to demolish a mountain.

However, he wasn't damaged at all, and he was looking down at her. Niberis felt her heart sink when she saw Azell laugh coldly.

“Did you think Insulation magic could only be used by a magician? Do you really think you can solve everything with a thunder strike? You are sorely mistaken if you think you can take on the world even if you are a high level magician. ”

Azell changed his magical energy into an insulator. He wrapped his magical energy around himself, then he let the thunder strike pass through him. Magical energy could be changed into any attribute. Since it was obvious to Azell that the opponent was going to use a thunder strike, he was able to easily defend against it.

Azell's continued to attack.

‘Earth's Sage!’

He tilted his sword slightly as he moved in an odd fashion. Niberis' lower body inside the barrier received a weak impact from the sword as it passed by. The impact wasn't enough to hurt her. However, Niberis was shaken when she realized Azell had pierced through her barrier, and the attack had affected her.

‘This is.....?!’

In front of the surprised Niberis, Azell used another technique.



‘Storm Dragon’s Claw!’

Azell slightly pull his sword back, then he struck.

The result was extraordinary. The movement shouldn’t allow a human body to deliver such power. In a flash, the accelerating blade moved faster than the speed of sound. It ripped through the barrier, then a shock wave exploded.

Kwahhhhhhng!

Accompanying an explosive sound, Niberis was flung away.

“Kook.....!”

Before she collided with the ground, she was barely able to change the trajectory of her flight. Niberis moaned. There was a slight rip near the clothes on her chest, and blood dripped down near her lips.

“As expected. Your possession of the name soaked in sin wasn’t for show.....”

Niberis was speaking, while refusing to yield, when she became startled. At that moment, Azell had appeared behind her back, and he had swung his sword.

Pahhhhhhhhh!

The barrier with the pre-programmed instructions barely activated in time.

However, Azell had predicted this would happen. When the sword strike collided with the barrier, he didn't resist against the force. He was flung away as he rotated his body.

Then Azell disappeared. He made use of the repulsive force, then he used the Instantaneous Movement in mid-air even though he didn't have any place to push off from!

Niberis' instincts warned her of her imminent death, so she desperately yelled out.

“The Dragon in my blood, Awake!”

At the same time, a strong shock-wave exploded with her at the center.

Kwahhhhhhhhg!

The ripple of destruction spread out in a circle, and the radius of several dozen meters were destroyed.

“Ha-ah, ha-ah.....”

Niberis was dripping with cold sweat. She was breathing hard

since he had quickly poured out her magical energy. She did it because the fear of death had crawled up to the back of her neck. If she hadn't prepared a trump card, her head would have been separated from her neck.

“I knew it, you bastard.... You are a person who've studied the forgotten techniques.”

Niberis spoke as she covered her face with one hand. She wasn't just speaking to him. Her voice itself was a magic trying to oppress the opponent.

From across the dirt cloud, she heard Azell's voice.

“Forgotten techniques?”

“Yes. I know about men like you. They are morons with swords, but they also know how to reach the great wisdom. I've watched what you've done. You did impossible feats that most others couldn't replicate.”

“Since you are talking like that, it must mean your organization hasn't forgotten about the knowledge. They must have preserved it.”

The conversation between the two were a part of the battle. They used their voice in an attempt to over power each other, and they were trying to confuse the other's senses. At the same time, they were furiously scanning the surrounding for each other's location.

“Maybe.....”

Azell continued to speak, but she couldn't see him through the cloud of dust. She could only make out a faint silhouette.

However, Niberis already knew that the silhouette wasn't Azell.

“...did you guys steal the knowledge from humans?”

The voice kept coming from different places.

Moreover, the silhouette's location kept changing.

She was using her Search magic to chase after his life signature, but Azell wasn't that easy of an opponent. He was overtly spreading his life signature to various locations. It basically made it impossible for her to determine where he was.

Niberis also tried to use his voice to determine where he was. However, Azell was able to bewilder her on that front too.

‘Truthfully, if he said he was a high level magician instead of a Spirit Order practitioner, I would have believed him.’

Niberis knew high level Spirit Order practitioners were a ludicrous existence. She knew it since her organization also had Spirit Order practitioners who had inherited the lost knowledges.

Still, Azell was an enigma to Niberis.

“You, who knew about and performed the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual...”

Niberis asked in a quiet voice.

“Did you really kill a dragon?”

“...what if I did?”

“It’s weird. You most definitely possess outstanding techniques. However....”

Niberis voiced her doubt.

“Your magical energy is too weak. You might be able to kill a high ranking magician with that quantity of power, but it would be impossible to kill a dragon.”

When Spirit Order practitioners reach a certain level, their magical energy increases proportionally. As a Spirit Order practitioner becomes more skillful, the person can efficiently deal with more magical energy.

The skills and magical energy shown by Azell was unbalanced. The magical energy couldn’t be compared to Azell’s skill. If Azell

didn't have sufficient magical energy, then it would have been impossible for him to reach such a high skill level.

“However, you were able complete the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. What method did you use?”

“If I give you an answer, will you let us live?”

“I might.”

“If you are going to tell a lie, why don't tell a better one?”

Azell snorted.

Niberis spoke.

“I'm telling you the truth. I'll guarantee your lives. I promise on my name.”

“It basically means you are going to imprison us as new recruits.”

“Yes.”

“This negotiation has come to an end.”

“That's a shame.”

Niberis really felt regret. Many people wrecked their lives from trying to satisfy their curiosity, and magicians were the front runners in leading such a life. Even Niberis couldn't escape from the magician's disposition. She felt regret at the fact that she had to kill Azell, who was a box full of mysteries.

As the dust cloud slowly settled, Niberis decided on how she should act.

Hoooooooooooooooooh!

A whirlwind rose up and the cloud of dust disappeared. At that exact moment, Azell appeared in the front and in the back at the same time.

Niberis couldn't wait any longer, so she cleared the dust cloud. However, Azell was aiming for this opportunity. When she raised a whirlwind, the area around her fuzzed for a brief moment. From inside the dust cloud, Azell had created two clones, and when both were discovered, her attention would focus them.

“As I suspected.”

The person who felt a frightening sensation was Azell.

# Chapter 42 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (7)

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Shweeeeeeeeeee!

From beneath Niberis' feet, a tentacles of darkness extended itself. Azell barely avoided it as he retreated.

“Kook... I was outsmarted. I underestimated her too much.”

Blood was flowing from Azell's body. The leather armor was shredded as if it was paper. His chest had a wound as if a wild beast had scratched him.

Azell had lost this round of the fight. Niberis had seen through Azell's plan, and she had counter-attacked.

The several dozen tentacles of darkness formed around Niberis' surrounding, and they didn't reflect any light. The tentacles of darkness didn't look solid as it crawled. Niberis spoke from within.

“I can't kill the Dragon Demon Princess... But I can kill you if I want to.”

“As expected. I was the one who had been disadvantaged.”

Well before Azell and Niberis fought each other, both of them had eyed each other to see how the other fought against one's



opponents.

Niberis was the one who had benefited from the prior investigation. Azell had shown his skills when he blitzed the members of the Dragon's Shadow to resolve the situation quickly. Niberis couldn't kill Arrieta, so she hadn't shown any of her real abilities. Niberis was of the Dragon Demon race, and her magic was outstanding. She also used the latest magic techniques, so there weren't enough information to gauge Niberis' true power.

Niberis spoke.

“The secrets within your head is valuable. However, sometimes it is beneficial to throw away the small prey to catch a bigger one. I'm going to go all out now.”

Her voice was heard from behind Azell as a different Niberis rushed him. However, Azell didn't turn around.

Another Niberis appeared next to Azell's side.

“Hoo-ooht. So I'm guessing you aren't fooled by the clones?”

“Unfortunately not.....”

Azell grinned, and he stomped his foot again.

Koo-oohng!

A vibration spread with Azell as the epicenter. It is the most basic method to deal with the clones made by the opponent's illusion magic. It is to see how the clones reacted to the vibrations, and one would also observe if the cloud of dirt affected the bodies. This was how one could differentiate a clone from the opponent's real body.

Since Niberis' clones were illusions, she couldn't do anything about these weak points. After realizing where her real body was, Azell unhesitatingly charged towards her.

However, Azell's sword cut through empty air.

"I thought you were someone who was a little bit smarter."

Niberis appeared behind the flustered Azell. The body that was determined to be the real body was a bait placed by Niberis!

The tentacles of darkness stretched towards Azell. It tried to wrap around Azell's body.

"I am."

Suddenly, Azell's expression changed into a smile. At the same time, his storm-like sword play blocked the tentacles of darkness.

This situation was happening as he intended. Azell had the 'Eyes of Truth', so he hadn't been blinded by the clone in the first place.

However, he wanted to trick Niberis, so he used the traditional method to deal with her illusions.

“I thought you were a little bit smarter since you are of the Dragon Demon race.”

“What?”

Niberis became surprised at that moment.

Sss-paht!

Something unseen passed by her cheek. When she felt the sharp cut on her cheek, she froze.

‘What the.....?!’

She couldn’t understand what had happened. What had cut her cheeks?

She knew her head had been nearly pierced. She took the risk of dividing her attention, so she could nest another barrier within the other just in case. This had save her life.

Niberis turned her head without realizing it. She knew she shouldn’t turn her head, but she couldnt’ stop her head from reflexively turning.

She saw a single short sword on the ground a short distance away.

‘That broke through my barrier?’

The surprised Niberis immediately realized what she was doing, and her body shuddered. She was in midst of a battle yet she had took her eyes off her enemy!

She desperately turned her head back to look at Azell. He was in front of her with 5 floating swords in the air. He levitated the swords he had secretly picked up from the dead monsters, and the swords were letting out light.

“Dragon’s Forces! Go to war!”

At his shout, blue lights in the shape of a dragons wrapped around the swords. At Azell’s shout, the swords shot forward like arrows.

“Kook!”

Niberis desperately used her barrier magic. She was able to block every sword with a light dragon around it.

At the same time, she was puzzled.

‘Why is the power of the attack so weak?’

She had expected a dangerous attack since her eyes had been drawn away. However, the attack was weak enough to make her yawn.

The reason was soon revealed.

“Princess! Right now!”

From behind Azell, Arrieta charged forward. Under Azell’s instructions, Arrieta had recovered her stamina, then she had been waiting for this moment!

The Dragon Demon magic injected within the white blade exploded forth, and it reacted to Arrieta’s command.

“Oh Evil Darkness, Rend Apart!”

Pahhhhhhh!

The flood of light assaulted Niberis. At the same moment, Niberis realized what trap Azell had readied.

‘I never knew such a devilish technique existed!’

There were 5 swords stabbed into the top of the barrier magic. Each sword was letting out various pattern of magical vibrations, and the swords were resonating with each other. The pillar of light

sent by Arrieta struck on top of the swords. The swords continuously changed its magical pattern to disrupt the barrier.

This was a technique that would give nightmares to any magician. Every second the magical pattern randomly changed at those points. This attack was ruthlessly breaking down her barrier magic!

Moreover, Azell started to move from beyond the barrier.

“Dragon’s Forces! Bloom!”

The shout carried his command. With time stretched, he amplified his magic, then he poured out all of his power.

The light dragon wrapped around his sword. and it let out a roar as it attacked Niberis.

“Kyahhhhhh!”

Niberis let out a scream.

She was going to die like this! The rampaging dragon of light was going to absorb into her bones!

Her brain felt like it was burning from just maintaining her crumbling barrier. With her desperate will, she activated another magic. Unlike human magic, she could use a power that could bend

reality with her will. She concentrated her Dragon Demon magic to activate a magic that would have been impossible to cast in her normal state!

“Mirror of... Emptiness.....!”

Accompanying a shout that seemed to have been wrung out of her, the pillar of light heading towards her like hail warped!

Kwahhhhhh!

The light dragon bent as it was almost upon her, and it pierced towards the sky. The massive barrier of darkness covering the surrounding ripped, and the night sky showed itself.

Gohhhhhhhh.....!

The thunderous roar quickly sped away, and the air started to change.

7

A faint light shined through the space that had been completely dominated by darkness. The moon was barely there, but compared to the complete darkness of the Curtain of Darkness it felt very bright.

“Ha-ah, Ha-ah, Ha-ah.....”

Niberis swayed as if she was going to fall over.

However, Azell didn't attack her. It wasn't because he had used up all of his power. If he had, he wouldn't have grabbed Arrieta, who was about to charge Niberis.

Arrieta turned to look at Azell with a questioning look. Azell told her his reason.

“If you charge in right now, you will be hurt.”

“...what?”

Arietta was surprised, and instead of explaining himself, Azell twitched his finger. This caused the sword that had grazed Niberis before to rise up from behind Niberis. It flew towards her.

When the sword approached Niberis' vicinity, it was bizarrely distorted, and the sword broke.

Azell thought to himself as he saw this.

‘She had caused her magic to berserk in a fixed domain. She forced the uncontrollable explosive power into a certain direction.’



Normally, one couldn't control the berserk magical energy. The moment when one fails to control one's magic, the magician should expect death from the berserk magical energy.

However, Niberis purposefully caused it to happen, and she used a method only available to the Dragon Demon race to control it.

‘Even if her control over the magic crumbled, she used her strong will to force change in the reality. She had poured a massive amount of Dragon Demon magic to cause this effect. In theory, it is possible to do this, but she actually pulled it off... She is a formidable young lady.’

The difference between magic, and dragon demon magic was simple.

At its heart, will was refined into magic. Whether it is magic or Spirit Order, the technique could cause phenomena that would occur in nature.

On the other hand, Dragon Demon magic didn't have to go through a complicated process like magic. It can coerce natural phenomena through the owner's will. The being could just create a strong mental image of fire erupting as one focused one's Dragon Demon magic then the fire would form. (TLN: basically dragon demon magic can skip the refinement process+spells)

The special attribute of Dragon Demon magic was only found in Dragon Demons, and those of the Dragon Demon race. This was the reason why they had more talent for becoming magicians.

When one becomes a high ranked magician, the gap between magic and Dragon Demon magic lessens. However, there were certain things that could only be done by those possessing Dragon Demon magic.

The technique used to defend herself by Niberis was an example of this method. She intentionally let the magic making up the barrier go berserk, then she used the special attribute of the Dragon Demon magic to coerce the magic into a certain direction. The light dragon that was about to break down the barrier was swept up into the magic going berserk and it was sent towards the sky.

Niberis let out a dark laugh.

“Hooh hooh. This is quite humiliating for me as a magician..”

Magicians strive to use elaborate magic to get the result they want. She had lost in terms of technique to an opponent, who was woefully lacking power. Moreover, her life had been saved from danger by using brute force. As a magician, her humiliation was endless.

Shweeeee....

Once the magical energy goes berserk, the thrashing magical energy doesn't dissipate immediately. This was why Azell hadn't attacked. Niberis looked like she wasn't doing anything, but she was blocking the magical energy from harming her.

Niberis spoke as she calmed her breathing.

“I lost this round of battle. I’ll admit it.”

Her pride had been hurt. She stared at Azell with fearsome eyes.

“So, I’ll ask you again. You with the name seeped in sin. Do you have more methods left you could use?”

Niberis’ murderous intent pressed down on Azell and Arrieta’s senses.

Azell looked at Niberis with a stiff face. Niberis took one step forward.

“Your technique is much superior to any human I have come across. However... Unfortunately, you don’t have the power to back up your techniques.”

Azell used surprising techniques, and psychological traps to outmaneuver Niberis. However, she would crush him with the absolute difference in their power.

No matter how outstanding his technique was it was meaningless if one was short on power. Maybe if it was any other opponent, it might be possible for him to defeat them. However, Niberis was someone he couldn’t defeat with techniques only.

Suddenly Azell spoke.

“Well, I had some idea things might turn out like this.”

“...what?”

Niberis eyebrows rose when Azell relaxed his expression.

Azell spoke.

“You might be able to block my attacks.”

Azell had regarded Niberis highly. Even if he compared her to the Dragon Demon race from the Dragon Demon war, she would be considered to be on the strong side.

However, he had put down two traps to deal a great blow to her.

He had tricked her into believing he had pierced through her unbreakable barrier to cause confusion within her.

Azell had used the ‘Earth’s Sage’ since Niberis barrier didn’t extend below ground. He had used the energy within his foot to circumvent the barrier from below, while he acted as if he used some meaningful sword art.

However, if he put too much power into his stomp then there was a high chance Niberis would react to it.

To create a psychological disturbance, he used his mental wave to stimulate Niberis' sense into believing she had received a light blow.

At the same moment she became agitated, Azell had used another technique towards the swords touching Niberis' barrier. The constantly changing magic pattern was used on a portion of Niberis barrier. He had mixed in his energy, so he could change the pattern as he wanted. Afterward, he kept distracting Niberis, so she hadn't realized the fact that the powerful attack had ripped opened the barrier.

He kept up with attack to create a crucial weakness. He used his Concealment technique to hide a nearby short sword, and he controlled it remotely. He created a small gap and he had squeezed the sword through the barrier.

When Niberis was caught off-guard, she unconsciously turned around to see what happened. This created a decisive crack in her defense, and he had attacked by mobilizing Arrieta. Even as he did this, Azell had made plan in case Niberis was able to block the attack.

“However, the barrier that was imprisoning us is gone.”

At his words, Niberis eyes widened. The Curtain of Darkness they had prepared beforehand using magical tools had been ripped

apart and it was gone.

# Chapter 43 - When I Met Someone Who Was Dead (8)

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Azell continued to speak.

“I know the barrier wasn’t solely made to prevent us from escaping. I’m not sure of its exact purpose, but there must be a reason why you waited until this time to attack us.”

“Kook.....!”

Niberis bit her lips.

Azell’s words got to the heart of the matter. The Curtain of Darkness wasn’t prepared to simply block Arrieta from running away. She had put in all the effort to conceal what was happening inside the barrier from outside eyes.

Azell grinned.

“I guess I’m right?”

Azell confirmed his conjecture was correct, when he saw Niberis’ reaction. He didn’t know what her reasons were, but she had a reason for using a grandiose magic like the Curtain of Darkness to kidnap Arrieta in secret.

Niberis’ expression soon calmed down. Her face was filled with a

cold fury as she glared at Azell.

“We’ve been dancing on the palm of your hand. However... Don’t think everything will turn out as you intended.”

If Niberis acted wisely, she would have retreated right now. However, her pride wouldn’t allow it.

‘How could I fail at such a insignificant mission? I won’t allow this to happen.’

After her skills were recognized, she had never failed a mission tasked to her. Her perfect career will be blemished from this? She wouldn’t allow it.

“Only death awaits those who raise the Dragon’s ire.”

Niberis let out a thick wave of darkness. Azell disappeared in front of her.

Pah-jijiji-jeek!

Azell moved towards her using his Instantaneous Movement, and he swung his sword right on top of her barrier....or that’s what she had thought for a brief second.

‘Clone?’



Niberis was taken aback. Azell's clone had attacked her.

‘His clone is able to attack like his real body?’

If he was using magic, then she would understand how he did it. One would just have to materialize magic at the clone's location.

However, this attack wasn't carried out in that fashion. She most definitely felt the impact of a sword with magic imbued within it.

‘This is impossible.’

She wasn't able to comprehend what was happening using her knowledge, so she froze for a moment. Azell used this hesitation to grab Arrieta's hand, and they attempted an escape.

-Everyone run! I'll hit them from the side, so coordinate an escape!

Azell shouted with his Whispering. After fighting without support, Giles and Boar had defeated most of the monsters on their end, and they looked up in surprise. Azell ran into their midst, and he ruthlessly cut down any monsters near them.

After a second delay, Giles and Boar surprisingly reacted swiftly. After cutting down the monsters frozen from Azell's sneak attack, Boar put Enora over his shoulder, then he started running.

“Kyahhk!”

“Ms Enora! Please pardon my action!”

Enora let out a scream, but Boar didn't have time to be considerate.

“Oh no!”

Niberis realized a beat too late, and she was taken aback. Who could have guessed they would run away like this?

“I won't let you get away!”

Darkness erupted beneath Niberis' feet. The darkness coalesced to form crawling tentacles. From below, a large shape that would be the body connecting to the tentacles revealed itself.

It was like the corrupted being in that it chased after the party as if it was sliding across the ground.

## 8

Azell's party started to run away. From the start, they all dispersed into different directions.

This was a decision made by Azell. Azell surmised they would all

die if they initially ran away in a group. He ordered everyone to disperse.

Before everyone could carry out his instructions, an unexpected problem arose. It was something even Azell couldn't have foreseen.

Ooooooooooh!

A light flashed in front of his eyes. Azell quickly raised his sword to block.

Kwah-ahng!

The sound of an explosion rang out, and Azell was flung back.

“Kuh-uhk!”

The impact spread through his entire body, and his body was briefly paralyzed.

The existence giving off a fearsome aura cleared his throat, then he opened his mouth.

“Hmm hmmm. I was on standby just in case.... It seems I will be of some help, miss.”

He was a swordsman wearing a black armor that covered his entire body. Judging by his voice, he was an imposing male. His face wasn't visible, so his age couldn't be determined. He had a large body that was over 2 meters tall.

As if it was a set to his armor, he held a black sword. As befitting his large 2 meter frame, the sword was twice as large and twice as thick as a normal sword.

“Duran? Why are you here....”

Niberis, who was tracking the party, revealed her dismay. It seemed even she didn't realize the presence of the dark swordsman.

“Ah ah. I was here, since I also have some business in this country.”

“Did the elders send you?”

“No. The elders didn't order it, but.....”

“But?”

“This old man's overly cautious nature brought me here. I will apologize if this offends you.”

“You couldn't trust me to take care of a .....!”

For a moment, Niberis' hurt pride made her angry. However, she regained her composure soon.

“...no. I am in your debt. You made a wise decision. Thank you.”

The large dark knight named Duran looked towards Azell.

Azell gritted his teeth.

‘Kook. This bastard... He is strong.’

The pressure emitted by his entire body wasn't normal. Even if Azell had been ambushed, he had received enough damage to receive internal wounds. This person was the strongest Spirit Order practitioner he had encountered since he had woken up in this age.

‘If it was only that woman from the Dragon Demon race, then I could have handled.....’

Originally, Azell wanted the party to run away in different directions. He planned on running away with Arrieta to lure Niberis away. After putting a sufficient distance away from the enemy's troops, he planned on risking himself by blocking Niberis as Arrieta ran away. He would have done his utmost to delay her, then he would have extracted himself. That was his plan.

However, when Duran made his appearance, that plan was scrapped.

‘This is a hopeless situation. Shit.’

Azell wasn't omniscient and omnipotent. His constant self-assured appearance was a false front he put up to gain a psychological advantage against his enemies. Inside, he was desperately thinking of a way to break away from this situation. He merely acted on a faint hope.

Duran was in the front, and Niberis was in the rear.

Will they be able to break away from this situation?

‘If we ran away as we scattered.....’

“Hoo hoo. I can hear the gears in your head turning, shrimp.”

At that moment, Duran let out a cold laugh. Simultaneously, Duran's murderous intent swept over Azell.

However, he didn't attack immediately. Duran spoke to Niberis.

“I'll keep telling you this, miss.... I'm not here, because I was worried about you failing in your mission.”

“What are you saying?”

“Even if you were successfully pulling off the plan, I would have joined in to wrap this up as soon as possible. Or I would have advised you to pull back.”

“...you want me to give up on the fishes I have already almost caught?”

Niberis asked with an edge in her voice. Duran replied softly.

“I would recommend that course of action. It would be safer that way.”

“I don’t know your reason, but I won’t do so.”

“Then I will first respect my lady’s wishes, and I will do my best to help you. However, if the event I am worried about comes to pass, then please listen to my request.”

Duran warned Niberis that he didn’t agree with her, but he was also trying to be considerate of her pride. Niberis was that important to the organization. She held an important status. This is why Duran personally treasured Niberis.

After deciding on their course of action, Duran asked a question.

“What would you like to do with everyone excluding the Dragon

Demon Princess, miss?”

“We’ll kill them all here.”

“If the report about the Dragon Demon Princess’ temperament is correct, then wouldn’t she have some worth as a hostage?”

“That may be true, but I wouldn’t put too much trust in the information. No matter how noble a character she possesses, wouldn’t she be filled with guilt if she realizes her current situation?”

“Understood. Then.....”

Duran’s figure disappeared.

Shwee shwee shwee shweee!

In a blink of an eye, Duran appeared in front of the party. Duran appeared in front of each member of Azell’s party.

Everyone was surprised, so they reflexively attacked. However, everyone struck empty air.

Too-hahk!

There was only one real body, and it was the one that had



appeared in front of Enora. As Azell blocked his attack, sparks flew everywhere.

“Ho-oh.”

From within Duran’s helmet, a sound of admiration leaked out.

“You were able to realize which one was my real body. You are pretty good for a shirmp.”

Azell had ignored the clone that appeared in front of him, and he had immediately ran in front of Enora.

Azell glared as his blade pressed against the other’s sword.

“You attacked a weak child first... Your actions are quite dirty befitting a dark heretical organization.”

“I was being merciful.”

“What?”

“You guys will all die here anyways. She would be tormented if she saw the dirty deeds I was going to inflict on all of you. Wouldn’t it be a mercy if I killed her first?”

Duran wasn’t making a sarcastic remark. He meant what he said.

Since Niberis decided to kill them all, he would follow her order. He would also have to kill Enora, so he would rather not draw it out. He was going to kill her before she realized what was happening. He considered it a mercy.

“Anyways, now that I see your skill, I can understand why you gave the miss so much trouble. However.....”

Duran’s figure disappeared. Azell quickly used his Instantaneous Movement to follow him.

Che Che Che Che Cheng!

Both men disappeared. Sounds of steel clashing and sparks rang out from everywhere.

The others couldn’t even follow the two men’s movements. It was a high speed battle. Boar and Giles couldn’t pick up their movements at all. Arrieta could barely follow the shapes with her eyes.

Suddenly, Duran stopped in one place. Azell appeared right in front of him, and Azell brought down his sword.

“Hoop!”

Too-hahk!

Duran held firm like a boulder as he flung Azell's sword strike away. The surface beneath Azell broke, and he was flung away.

Duran spoke.

“You are lacking in power.”

Even Duran was surprised by Azell's techniques. This age had already forgotten the great techniques of the past yet a young man possessed this level of skill.

The only problem was his strength was too low compared to his skills. It wouldn't be a problem if he could overwhelm an opponent with his superior skill, but Duran had learned the secret techniques passed down through the organization.

“Moreover, you are quite tired from facing the young lady.”

Duran swung his sword down through empty air. A transparent force suddenly formed following the arc of his swing.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

The wave of power expanded into a crescent shape, and it shot towards Azell's party. He had merely swung his sword, yet the earth in front of him parted. Moreover, a shock wave that looked as if it would swallow the party whole was formed.

At the same moment, Niberis casted her magic.

Kwah-gwah-gwahng! Ggwah-gwahng!

Lightning poured down towards everyone except Arrieta. The wave of power Duran produced with his sword was timed exquisitely with the lightning as they struck.

Kwahhhhhng!

The surface of the ground shook as the sound of explosion rang out.

Duran spoke as he saw the the earth being flung in all direction.

“You are a very surprising shrimp. I knew my lady wouldn’t have any trouble facing someone like the Dragon Demon Princess.... I guess it was all him?”

“It is unpleasant, but I acknowledge his skill.”

The cloud of dust settled, and Azell’s figure came into view.

“Koooh.....”

Blood was running down Azell’s face.

The previous attacks was too well time that Azell couldn't block it without taking damage. It would have been possible to dodge on his own, but he had to protect everyone in this party. This additional condition didn't give him much option.

‘What should I do?’

He didn't see any way out.

Duran was too big of an existence. His skill was at a level where Azell couldn't look down upon it, and his magical energy would overpower Azell.

Also, the difference in equipment was too large. Duran had a suit of armor. His sword and equipment were enchanted with strong magic.

‘I'll have to think of this as the worst case scenario..’

Azell resolved this was the place where his bones would be buried. He couldn't take out everyone. He had no choice, but to decide on a priority list.

It was at that moment.

“A—rri—e—ta—!”

From afar, a thunder-like sound rang out, and the shout shook the heavens.

# Chapter 44 - Dragon Demon Duke (1)

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After a moment, everyone stopped moving from surprise. The timing of the voice was too abrupt, and the volume was frightening.

In the surrounding, the surprised birds flew up into the air, and a racket was heard when the animals ran away. During all of this, the voice rang out again.

“Wh-er-e ar-e y-ou—!”

It felt as if the sound would rupture one’s eardrums. Enora fell to the floor as she covered her ears. Even though Giles and Boar used their Spirit Order to protect their eardrums, their eardrums still hurt.

The first one to move was Azell.

Kah-ahng!

Azell and Duran crossed blades as sparks flew. Azell had used the brief opening to attack Duran.

“Princess!”

Azell accelerated as he called out to Arrieta. Every time his heart pulsed an explosive magical energy was produced. His movements

increased more and more in speed.

‘This is the decisive moment for victory!’

The techniques he used after he overflowing his body with magical energy put an extreme burden on his body, and he had already used it once before. Azell’s body and energy pulse still stung from pain.

However, it was time to lay everything on the line now. This wasn’t just about winning. This was for his survival! If he started thinking about the aftermath, he might be killed instead. Azell wouldn’t act so foolishly.

Che-che-che-che-cheng!

“Kook. Impudent shrimp.....!”

Azell had gotten the drop on him. Duran was relentlessly pushed backwards. Azell’s movement was so fast and chaotic that Duran didn’t have a moment to think. Moreover.....

‘Behind!’

Azell kept changing his location using his Instantaneous Movement. He was using this technique to travel a short distance, and he kept changing the rhythm of his attack. Bloodcurdling attacks kept coming towards Duran.



‘Where did a shrimp like him appear from?’

The essence of Spirit Order was to control the mind and senses. Azell was putting on a full display of this fact. Azell was threatening Duran with his mental power, and he used his ever changing movements to confuse the other’s senses. Once Azell gained an upper hand Duran didn’t find the chance to transition from defense to offense.

“The Light that Rends the Evil Darkness!”

Woooooooooo!

The white sword Arrieta raised into the air let out a blinding light. The straight beam of light lit up the darkness, and it revealed their location.

At the same moment, Azell disappeared from in front of Duran. He appeared in front of Niberis. Niberis’ barrier activated automatically, and the barrier blocked Azell’s sword strike. Almost simultaneously, Niberis reflexively shot a beam of light towards Azell.

“Kuhk!”

A sound of an explosion rang out, and Duran’s scream could be heard. He had been hit by the beam of light shot by Niberis!

Niberis was dismayed. She was sure she had attacked in an entirely different direction from Duran. Moreover, Duran would have had enough time to deal with such an attack. However, Duran hadn't been able to properly defend against it as he was hit.

‘What did he do?’

Azell spun his body in front of the surprised Niberis, then he activated his Instantaneous Movement. He let out a powerful strike from behind her.

Pah-jijiji-jeek!

Niberis gave up on attacking, and she focused on blocking the sword strike. Azell clicked his tongue.

“At the very least, I wanted to take care of you... I guess I was too greedy.”

Azell retreated backwards without any regret.

Niberis was still having a hard time recovering from the impact.

‘What trick did he use this time?’

Azell asked the surprised woman.

“Do you want to continue this? It seems you exceeded your time limit.”

“.....”

Niberis glared at Azell. Azell laughed shamelessly as he let her gaze flow over him.

The method Azell had used was quite simple.

First, he disappeared from in front of Duran, then he ambushed Niberis. At the same time, he had made a clone behind Duran. Duran snorted as he planned on ignoring Azell’s clone, but the clone wasn’t an illusion. It was the clone ‘that could attack like the real body’, which had surprised Niberis before.

The startled Duran turned around to block the attack, and at that moment, Niberis had shot her beam of light.

Azell yelled out in delight inside when he saw this. This was the most favorable outcome that he assumed would happen.

When magicians had to quickly cast something that could cause physical damage, they enjoyed casting a light beam or a lightning strike. If Niberis had used her lightning strike, then Azell’s plan wouldn’t have worked. However, Azell had blocked her previous lightning strike with an Insulation technique. This was why Niberis unconsciously chose to use the light beam attack.

Moreover, a secondary trap was waiting for her.

‘If I know what attack is coming, then it is quite easy for me to change the trajectory of the attack.’

In a fight between normal opponents, those with excellent skills could predict which attack would be coming next. Some also had the ability to slightly alter the opponent’s attack.

For the high level Spirit Order practitioners, they could guess what magic was coming by looking at the opponent’s magical wave. They could come up with a countermeasure using this method. Azell confirmed Niberis was about to use her light beam attack, so he used his defensive qi to curve the trajectory of the light beam.

The timing had to be perfect. Duran had turned his body to block the clone that had shown up behind his back. Duran hadn’t expected a mental attack, so Azell pounced.

Azell shrugged his shoulders.

“If you sent a stronger attack then I could have killed that guy. How unfortunate..”

“Kook.....”

Duran grinded his teeth. Azell’s machination resulted in him received a blow. However, he was a high level Spirit Order

practitioner, and his armor had excellent defensive capability. He hadn't suffered too much from the attack.

“You—e—vil—bast—ards—!”

The thunderclap-like voice rang out much closer than before.

Duran spoke.

“Let us retreat, miss.”

“Is it because of him?”

“Yes.”

“The Dragon Demon Duke... I guess the elders' nagging wasn't said for caution's sake?”

Niberis bit her lips. The owner of the thunder-like voice was none other than the Dragon Demon Duke. He was Rulain Kingdom's strongest swordsman. His name was Kairen Tarantos.

Niberis queried.

“How did that man find out about this?”

“The Rulain royal family aren't all idiots. We are out of time,

miss”

“Kook... I understand.”

It happened at that moment.

“You dare lay your hand on my cute princess! Wait for me there! I’ll sever your heads!”

The voice was much closer than a moment before. He was already within 500 meters, and a beam of light rose from him. At the same time, an oppressive magical wave flared out.

“Oh, Dragon Sword. Burn the Evil Darkness!”

After the shout, he came a 100 meter closer. When he brought down his sword in empty air, he once again closed a distance of 100 meters.

“He’s attacking at this distance.....?!”

Niberis was taken aback. He had gotten much closer in a flash, but there was still 300 meters distance separating them. The Dragon Demon Duke wasn’t a magician. He was a famed swordsman, yet he was going to attack at this distance?

Duran stepped in front of her in dismay. A dark magical energy poured out from his body, and he put all his power into a single

strike.

At the same time, a hail of light came flying towards them from a couple hundred meters away.

Kwah kwah kwah kwah kwah!

‘It has this much power.....!’

Niberis gasped.

This was most definitely similar in nature as the technique used by Arrieta’s words of power.

However, the degree of power couldn’t even be compared. The difference was like the gap between an arrow and a ballista?

An entire portion of the forest was leveled, and the words of power he shouted burned the darkness away.

“Ooh ah ah.....”

Boar’s body shook at the sight. It was a terrible power. Cold fear gripped him when Boar thought about the attack having just passed over his head.

Kooh-gu gu gu gu gu.....

The light dispersed, and a large cloud of dust settled. The bewitched party members coughed. Azell was the only one, who was unperturbed. He clicked his tongue.

“Chet. They ran away.”

Boar was surprised at Azell’s words. He queried.

“They aren’t dead?”

“I would have already killed them, if they could be killed by an attack of that quality. He shouted from afar that he will be attacking. Wouldn’t anyone be able to avoid it?”

“No. Normally, people wouldn’t be able to dodge.....”

“They are capable of dodging such an attack. It had a lot of power behind it, but his movement was too large and slow. He telegraphed his punch, and he attacked after he gave them a warning.”

Boar shook his head at Azell’s retort. Boar couldn’t accept Azell’s words, but he didn’t have the energy to argue. Boar decided to let it go.

At that moment, a person showed up between the two of them. He suddenly showed up using Instantaneous Movement, and he



slid across the ground into the cloud of dust.

Chwahhhhhh!

He arrived in such a hurry that he couldn't properly decelerate his speed. He slid into the land he had upturned. He slid for over 20 meters before he came to a stop within the dust cloud.

“Kook. I guess... I wasn't too... late.....”

From the cloud of dust, a voice gasping for air was heard.

While everyone stared dumbly, Azell bowed his head.

“Your timing is quite exquisite. Thank you for your help.”

“Hoo hoo... Huk huk... I suppose so... Huk huk, huk huk... Huh-uhk, huk... It seems... Huk huk huk... you were speaking some... Huk... impudent words... Huk huk huk.”

Everyone thought the same thing as they listened to his words.

‘Why don't you either catch your breath or talk in a leisurely manner?’

He was gasping as if he was about expire, yet he got out all the words he wanted to say. He even tried to act like nothing was

wrong, but everyone pitied his overly transparent attempt.

Azell spoke.

“This is this and that is that. Well, you did run across a vast distance, so of course you would be in a rush.”

“...hoo-ooh.”

Finally, after catching his breath, the person stood up from inside the cloud of dust.

“The distance didn’t seem too large on the map, so I thought I would be here in a short amount of time. However, I had to cross a mountain and a lake. It was quite difficult. It felt as if I was going to die. It has been a long while since I’ve gotten a good workout like this.”

Everyone in the party except Azell and Arrieta flinched when they saw him.

The reason being the man wasn’t human. He was a young man of the Dragon Demon race with long black hair.

Azell gave his respect to this person.

“It is an honor to meet you, Dragon Demon Duke.”

The Dragon Demon Duke was named Kairen Tarantos.

He was called the living legend of the Rulaine Kingdom. When there weren't any battles, he only appeared during the official meetings. This is why not a lot of people knew what he looked like.

Moreover, he had been semi-retired in recent years, so no one knew about his youthful appearance. This was why Giles and Boar was shocked when they saw him.

Kairen was over 100 years old, but he looked to be in his mid-20s. Basically, he looked to be of similar age as Boar and Azell. Still, as a being from the Dragon Demon race, he had characteristics that was clearly different from humans, but that was it.

Kairen was looked like a young man with long black hair. He had dark blue eyes that gave him a cool impression, and his ears were noticeably longer than Arrieta's ears. On top of his ears, there were two black horns. It looked similar to a bull's horns, and it made him look strong and daunting.

## Chapter 45 - Dragon Demon Duke (2)

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After catching her breath, Arrieta gave her greetings.

“Sensei!”

“Oh, Arrieta. I'm glad you are fine...”

The delighted Kairen turned angry when he saw the state Arrieta was in. She didn't have any deep wounds, but Arrieta had been totally wrecked by Niberis.

“These bastards dare to wound the precious body of Arrieta, who I reared with the utmost care and affection!”

“...no. Please tell the truth. You didn't raise me with utmost care and affection.”

Arrieta let out a sigh as she retorted. Kairen acted like the dull father of a daughter, but he was like a demon when he instructed Arrieta.

Kairen grumbled.

“It was all done for your sake. No matter how precious the child is one has to sever one's affection when teaching martial arts. Anyways, I.....”

Kairen looked around his surrounding. He mumbled as he looked at the point where the strike he let out had landed.

“If I had a single more breath to spare, then I would have hit them for sure. How regretful.”

Kairen wasn't an idiot. He hadn't executed such an attack, so the enemy could deal with it. He hadn't told the party, but he had ran across a distance of 50km once Niberis' Curtain of Darkness enclosed Arrieta's party. He had crossed mountains, and lakes to run in a straight line towards this location. He had used all of his strength.

His breath had run out, and he had been filled with worry about Arrieta. He wasn't in a situation where he could carefully calculate his actions.

Azell was oblivious tot these facts, but he was still impressed with Kairen.

‘It's pretty amazing he was able to pull off an attack of such caliber when he was out of breath.’

Kairen had exposed his existence when he let out a thundering yell. It was done, so he could find Arrieta. It also drew the attention of the enemies towards him.

When the distance narrowed, he intentionally let out a strong attack that could be noticed by the enemy. He was trying to push

the enemies into backing off immediately.

The skill he showed to achieve his goal was awe-inspiring.

He had let out his attack from 300 meters away, but it wasn't as if he used his power without any control. When the attack was first shot out, it was like a thin line of thread. Magic had been compressed to its highest density, and as it flew closer to the enemy, it exploded into hail of light.

To hit his enemy across a vast distance, he had let out a precisely controlled attack that almost lost no magic until it exploded. Moreover, the timing had been so exquisite that the explosion was limited to targeting only Niberis and Duran.

‘If he was born during the Dragon Demon Wars, he could have made a name for himself.’

Kairen's strike left a deep impression on Azell.

‘Moreover, those swords.....’

Azell looked at the swords on Kairen's waist. He had a pair of black sword, and it was shaped like Arrieta's sword. There was a gradual curve to the blades.

‘It's emitting Dragon Demon magic..’

This was the reason why Azell had become interested. To the extent of Azell's knowledge, there were a lot of weapons with magic imbued within it. However, the only weapon that can emit Dragon Demon magic was a weapon called Dragon Maqi. Kairen's sword wasn't a Dragon Maqi yet it was emitting Dragon Demon magic.

Kairen clicked his tongue. (TLN: soul infused weapon like Azell's Dragon Maken)

“Chet. It would have been great if you carried around at least one healer in your party. Since time is of the essence, you should apply this to your wounds. No scars will form.”

He took out a wooden bottle from inside his shirt, and he passed it to her. It was a healing medicine made by the alchemists.

Arrieta queried as she received it.

“So, sensei...”

“Mmmm?”

“I'm very thankful for your timely help, but... How did you know I was here?”

It seemed everyone was curious, so their gazes focused on him. Kairen replied.

“The Dragon Demon Queen asked me to find you.”

“My mother did?”

“Didn't you send word that you were attacked by a seditious group of people when you went to meet the Western Border guards?”

“Yes.”

“The Dragon Demon Queen asked me to go check up on you, since you took a minimal number of escorts.”

“Is that really all there is to it?”

As if Arrieta couldn't accept his answer, she asked again.

He said he came at the request of the Dragon Demon Queen, since she was worried. It seemed like a likely story on the surface, but Arrieta knew the reason he gave was ridiculous.

Of course, the Dragon Demon Queen could ask Kairen. However, Kairen would never leave his territory just because of a request made by the Dragon Demon Queen. If Kairen was someone who would cross vast distance, because he was worried about his pupil, then the throne would make numerous requests for his aid. The throne would use him with glee.



Kairen smiled.

“I knew my pupil isn't stupid.”

“Even if I had been stupid, I could guess what sensei would do since I know you so well.”

“Yes. As you probably guessed, I don't move unless there is a special reason. The Dragon Demon King's followers got involved this time. Moreover, they were powerful ones.”

Kairen hadn't known the name of the organization called Dragon's Shadow. Still, he had recognized they were Dragon Demon King's followers, and the fact that they were powerful fighter capable of posing a danger to Arrieta. This made them worthy of his attention.

“What does this all mean?”

“Unfortunately, I'm not in a position where I'm able to tell you. I will tell you one thing. I was motivated to move, because of the Dragon Demon King's followers.”

“But.....”

Arrieta wanted ask more questions, but she swallowed it when she saw Kairen's eyes. Her stern sensei's expression said he

wouldn't allow any further questions on the subject.

Instead, she asked a question regarding a different topic.

“How did you know I was in danger?”

“The signal from you was severed.”

The throne treated the Dragon Demon Princess as a precious commodity. This was why a special magic was designed to always locate where the Dragon Demon Princess was at all times, and it also showed if she was still alive. Kairen had borrowed a tool connected to this magic.

Then the signal showing where Arrieta was located was suddenly cut off. Kairen determined Arrieta was in a life threatening situation, so he came running here with all his might.

Arrieta spoke.

“Ah. That time.....”

Still, it seemed the Curtain of Darkness casted by Niberis was the main reason why Kairen had come here. Niberis had been thorough in hiding her actions with the Curtain of Darkness. She probably would have never imagined her action had basically invited Kairen to her.

Kairen spoke.

“If all your questions have been answered, then let's leave this place. This place is unsuitable for a camp.”

The party followed his words.

### 3

The party decided to camp a fair distance away from their original location. It was dark, so they weren't able to travel very far.

“We have a lot of things to buy at the next town.”

Azell mumbled as he looked over the camp fire. In the panic of battle, the party's horses had all been killed. Magic had exploded everywhere, and in the chaos, they had lost most of their belongings. Still, they had enough of their own possessions to camp one night in the outdoors.

Originally, Azell had asked for the most difficult time to be on watch, but everyone insisted he take the first watch. Then everyone quickly went to sleep. Maybe it was the relief one felt after escaping from a near death experience, but no one in the party could resist the fatigue that had washed over them when the tension melted away.

‘Well, I'm not in a state where I can refrain from giving in to my tiredness.’

Azell was so tired that he wanted to immediately close his eyes and sleep. He used Spirit Order to force himself not to sleep.

‘I have to train this damn body faster.....’

Azell looked at his arms as he let out a sigh.

In terms of being physically exhausted, he was much more tired than Giles or Boar. His body was too weak. His unconventional use of magical energy was allowing him to stay afloat. However, he felt the weakness of his body more acutely than his lack of magic.

“Why are you sighing?”

He heard a laid-back voice from between the party members. Azell replied without showing any signs of being surprised.

“You are using a very cumbersome method.”

Kairen was the one who had initiated the conversation. Kairen looked like he was sleeping, but he was faking it. Azell had been the only one, who hadn't been deceived.

“Your senses are quite good.”

“It is.”

Azell shrugged his shoulders.

It was a curious sight. Both of them hadn't decreased the volume of their voice, but no one woke up from their sleep. The situation didn't make any sense since everyone except Enora possessed very developed senses.

The reason being Azell and Kairen was using a special technique. The technique allowed only one's opponent to hear one's voice.

Kairen got up and he walked towards Azell. He wore armor, but it was as if a cat was walking. He didn't make any noise.

When Kairen sat down in front of the camp fire, he asked Azell a question.

“Why are you using such a cumbersome method?”

Azell knew Kairen had wanted to talk with him. However, he didn't know why Kairen had pretended to go to sleep. He had waited for everyone to fall asleep before he made his move.

Kairen spoke.

“You aren't surprised at all.”

“If something happens, I just accept what's happening then I roll with it.”

“That's a good attitude to have. I taught that child to think like that too.”

“You mean the princess?”

“Yes. To answer your previous question... I wanted to speak to you while that child wasn't listening in.”

“Hmm.”

He wanted to avoid Arrieta's attention more than the others. He basically didn't want her to know he had shared a conversation with Azell...

‘What's the reason?’

Is there a reason why Arrieta shouldn't know about this conversation? He didn't know about the inner intrigues of the royal family, so Azell had a hard time understanding Kairen's behavior.

Kairen asked a question.

“From your perspective, what do you think about Arrieta?”

“What's the meaning behind your question?”

“Do you perhaps think I'm asking you to judge her appearance? I don't even need to listen you to answer such a question. She is a woman of matchless beauty. She is the best in this kingdom. No, she is the best in this continent.”

“.....”

“Are you perhaps trying to deny this fact?”

“No. It isn't like... The princess is very beautiful.”

“Isn't she? It isn't worth it to question such a fact. I'm asking about the child as a warrior. It seems you have participated in numerous battles, so please give me your honest assessment.”

“You want me to speak the truth?”

“Yes. Don't sugar coat it. Well, if you want to suck up to me, it is your own choice. However, you won't get far with me by doing that.”

“Her potential is outstanding, and she displays great skill. She is much better than most her age.”

It was an honest assessment. If he considered her young age, Arrieta showed an amazing level of achievement physically and

mentally.

“It is as if.....”

Kairen grinned.

“You are making an assessment as if you are looking down from a high place. Does this mean you are so skilled that you are able to assess Arrieta in such way?”

Azell acknowledged he'd been had this time. Kairen had used Arrieta as a topic of conversation to gain an insight into Azell.

No matter how well Azell had hid his skill, his natural assessment of someone else revealed the standard he was assessing others by.

Of course, there are those who pretended to be strong to cut down others, but Azell didn't show such an attitude when he was talking about Arrieta. His assessment had been unaffected.



## Chapter 46 - Dragon Demon Duke (3)

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Azell asked a question.

“Didn't you already hear about me from the princess??”

“I did. This is the first time I've seen the child be so chatty. This must mean you must have left a big impression on her.”

Arrieta, in Kairen's memory, was a girl of few words. Moreover, she hadn't shown much interest in anyone except her family.

Arrieta, who was such a girl, showed a surprising amount of interest towards Azell. She excitedly spoke about Azell like a regular girl her age. From Kairen's perspective, it was a really weird experience.

Kairen spoke.

“Arrieta is a very good judge of character. I've taught her how to assess others, while excluding her feelings. However, when I hear about you from her, she is telling me some stories that are hard to believe.”

“What do you mean?”

“For example... The part where you have partial amnesia?”

Suddenly, he felt a strong overpowering feeling coming from Kairen. If he was a normal person, he probably would have stopped breathing. It wouldn't be strange if a normal person passed out from the pressure.

The scary thing was the overpowering feeling was only focused on Azell. Azell admired him, when he realized Kairen wasn't affect anything else in his surrounding.

‘He's good.’

Azell had been very disappointed after he woke up in this age. He hadn't met anyone, who had properly cultivated one's ability through actual battles.

The exceptions were his enemies, Niberis and Duran. Niberis had the skill to back up her claim as a high rank magician, and Duran was a properly trained Spirit Order Practitioner.

Kairen also presented himself to Azell as being comparable to Niberis and Duran. He possessed strong Dragon Demon magic, but he also used high level techniques as if it was nothing.

Kairen was surprised more than Azell.

‘What kind of a person is this bastard?’

He had poured out enough pressure to kill a human yet Azell didn't respond at all.

It wasn't as if Azell was countering his pressure. It was as if the pressure didn't exist at all, and Azell was letting it all flow past him.

Kairen was over 100 years old, but he had never seen someone respond to his pressure this way.

Still, this one move revealed Azell possessed enough skill, and it made Kairen interested in him.

Azell replied.

“Didn't you hear an ample amount of explanation from Arrieta?”

“I heard it.”

“So why are you being so suspicious of me?”

“No matter how I see it you are hiding too many things.”

Kairen had spoken to Arrieta. He had also listened to Giles, Boar and Enora about Azell. He heard all that had happened since Azell had been discovered inside the Balan forest.

The more Kairen listened to the story he realized he knew nothing about him.

He wasn't suspicious as to whether Azell was an enemy. Azell's attitude up until now gave a clear-cut answer. Kairen was worried since he couldn't understand Azell's true character.

Azell asked a question.

“What do you think I'm trying to hide?”

“A lot of things. First, it's your Dragon Demon magic.”

When Arrieta first saw Azell, she had wondered why a human had the scent of Dragon Demon magic. Moreover, the scent of the Dragon Demon magic given off by Azell was much stronger than before. Kairen was able to detect it since he was sensitive to the smell.

“Moreover... I heard about the story detailing the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

“Yes.”

“I'll just ask you a point-blank question. Did you kill the Dragon?”

“.....”

Azell didn't immediately answer the question as he kept his

silence.

## 4

After glaring at Azell for a moment, Kairen continued speaking.

“I've fought with Dragons before. I've fought 3 of them.”

It was very rare for a Dragon to show up in human territories. When they did show up, it mostly led to catastrophes.

When Dragons and humans fought, humans had always come out victorious. However, humans had to insert a massive amount of troops. It was a hollow victory that required massive sacrifice and damage to the troops.

Kairen had the ability to contain such a situation. When the calamity called a Dragon appeared, Kairen gladly stepped forward to minimize the damage.

“If I see through the prism of my experience... I find it hard to believe you killed a Dragon.”

He acknowledged Azell possessed superb techniques as a Spirit Order Practitioner.

However, one cannot kill a Dragon with just techniques.

Even if an old man could master a technique to defeat a healthy young man, could he destroy a castle wall with it?

Azell queried.

“Did you hear my explanation regarding that incident?”

“You said another Dragon appeared to kill the Dragon. Isn't that what you said?”

“Yes.”

“Since the Dragon is dead, that must be the most compelling answer. It's impossible for you to have killed the Dragon. Therefore, you drew the attention of the Dragon then you desperately ran away. Then you entered into a different Dragon's territory, and the Dragons started to fight...”

Azell thought along the same line, so he had given such an excuse. The story was a bit too fantastic, so it was a dubious explanation. However, who could argue with the result of what had happened? It wasn't as if Azell was making up a story to distinguish himself. What can someone say when the story entailed a Dragon killing another Dragon?

Kairen spoke.

“I've heard about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual from somewhere before.”

“Is that so?”

“I just didn't know what it was. No one in my acquaintances know what it truly means. There aren't any decent records left. Whenever I saw it mentioned, it was 'Someone had initiated the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.' That was the extent of what was recorded in the records. I can only guess the ritual entails killing a dragon because it says so in the name.”

Azell listened carefully to Kairen's words. He was giving out precious information.

‘He had killed dragons before yet he doesn't know about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual? He isn't even human. He is a Dragon Demon with over 100 years under his belt yet... Hmm. From which point in time did the chain of knowledge break?’

Now Azell could surmise the severance of knowledge couldn't simply be explained by a historical event. From the conversation he had with Niberis, he could surmise the Dragon Demon King's worshippers had intentionally engineered such a result.

Kairen continued to speak.

“Yet you knew all about it.”

“Yes.”

“Moreover... The Dragon's Shadow's female magician, Niberis, made a big deal about you knowing this fact.”

“She did.”

“This is why I'm suspicious of a possibility.”

“What possibility?”

“The possibility that you might have a hidden backer.”

“A backer?”

Azell was a bit taken aback, since he hadn't thought Kairen would come up with such an explanation.

Kairen spoke.

“What if there is a hidden backer powerful enough to slay the Dragon? What if this was all planned out by him, and he sent you to Arrieta?”

“...do you like conspiracy theories?”

“I don't like it. However, akin to the Dragon Demon King's



worshippers, there are hidden evil forces, who try to influence the world from the darkness..”

Kairen didn't suspect Azell being a pawn of the Dragon's Shadow. The main reason being Kairen already suspected the reason behind the Dragon's Shadow attempted kidnapping of Arrieta.

If he was right about the reason behind the abduction, Azell had no reason to protect her. He would have struck from behind early on.

“Still, it doesn't guarantee you aren't part of some dangerous plot. You might be affiliated with another organization of Dragon Demon King worshippers, who is competing against the Dragon's Shadow.”

“Mmmm. How should I say this.....”

Azell scratched his head.

“If you think about everyone in those terms, then you should be suspicious of every person in the world.”

“Do you think you are in the same category as everyone else?”

“If you insist there are hidden hands that work without the notice of the entire world, I agree it does make me look a little bit more suspicious. However, no matter how I try I won't be able to shed your suspicions. Even if I die in the process of protecting the

princess, I wouldn't be able to shed the suspicion on me. I might be treated as someone who died by mistake while trying to hatch a plot.”

“It's been awhile since someone had the guts to make sarcastic remarks in front of me.”

“I guess you prefer men, who empty their head, and agree with everything the Duke says. Men who would agree with you even if you said the sun rises from the west.”

Both of them were laughing, but the atmosphere worsened. The pressure emitted by Kairen was kicked up a notch. However, Azell took it nonchalantly, and he started baiting Kairen. It was as if Azell was telling Kairen to try hitting him once if Kairen's temper got the better of him.

Kairen was the first one to back off. He withdrew his pressure, then he relaxed his expression.

“...well, all right. My words were a little harsh. I'll acknowledge that.”

“That was unexpected.”

“Mmmm?”

“I thought you would at least hit me once as a test.”

“Then you would send a counter, while saying 'I got you, you bastard'? You purposefully showed a hole in your defense. You also have a very twisted personality.”

“It isn't something I want to hear from you. I've heard from princess that you are famous for having a twisted personality.”

“You are arrogant. You are a pup, who doesn't know how scary the world is.”

Kairen snorted. He had a youthful appearance, but Kairen naturally acted like an old man. It wasn't just because he was over 100 years old. He held a position that was respected by everyone.

Suddenly, Kairen put on a serious expression.

“Just know this. I'm currently in a position where I have to consider every absurd conspiracy theories as if it might happen in reality. The actions of the Dragon Demon King's followers can't be understood by conventional means, since they are lunatics.”

Azell now knew why Kairen insisted on hiding their conversation from Arrieta. He didn't want to force his suspicions on her.

After a brief silence, Kairen spoke.

“I hope you can share one thing with me. Tell me about the

Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

“Didn't you already hear about it from the princess?”

“A human and a Dragon fights one-on-one to the death. Then the winner takes something from the defeated side. The human gets the Dragon's strength, and the Dragon gets the human's wisdom.”

“Correct.”

“How does that make any sense?”

Kairen couldn't accept it.

Each region had rituals with some spiritual meaning behind it. They were a product of the region's environment and history.

Such cultural rituals gained significance between the gap in knowledge within society.

It was quite absurd to Kairen that there existed a ritual between the humans and Dragons. It would have made sense if a magician and a specific Dragon performed the ritual after making a contract. However, this was a shared ritual where unknown number of humans and unknown number of Dragons can participate in it unconditionally. How could such a pact exist?

Azell stroked his chin.

“Hmmm. If I give you an explanation regarding the topic, then what will you give me in return?”

“You dare ask for something back when you are just answering my question?”

“I trust you are a fair person, since you are princess' teacher. There is worth to knowledge. Isn't that so?”

Kairen furrowed his brows as he let out a sound of frustration at Azell's words.

## Chapter 47 - Dragon Sword Duke (4)

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“It seemed the lesson I taught my student is grabbing at my ankles. All right. What do you want as a compensation for the knowledge? You don't have a personality where you would be tempted by materialistic goods.”

“Please tell me about your swords.”

Azell pointed at the pair of swords mounted around Kairen's waist.

Kairen put on a peculiar expression.

“Are you sure you are fine with just that?”

“Yes.”

“You are taking a loss on this deal. I'll accept it in any case. You can't back out now.”

“Why?”

“After a brief investigation, you would have been able to find out this information. Compared to what you are about to tell me, the price is very cheap.”

Kairen was nicknamed the Dragon Sword Duke, because of the

dual swords he used. Those swords were too famous, so there weren't any secrets that wasn't known to the public.

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

“I don't care.”

“Then I'll tell you about it. The swords are Dragon Swords(龍劍).”

“Dragon Sword?”

“From one to ten, the ingredients were all extracted from a Dragon's corpse. Moreover, these are magical swords forged with my blood.”

“That is why I can feel Dragon Demon Magic from them.”

“Yes. Is that why you were interested in them?”

“Yes. I've never seen a sword tinged with Dragon Demon magic.”

“Of course. There are only few in existence on this world. It is something I reconstructed after I saw the old records.”

“The old records?”

“It was a record about the Dragon Demon war.”

“What?”

Azell was confused. Weapons like the Dragon Swords didn't exist in his era.

Kairen spoke.

“There weren't any detailed descriptions, but I was able to find a passage saying the heroes of that age used weapons emitting Dragon Demon magic to fight against the Dragon Demon King's forces. However, I didn't know what those weapons were made out of or how to make them. For years, I gathered damaged records and through endless research, I found a story saying a Dragon had to be killed to make the weapon. This was why I guessed Dragon Slayer's ritual was part of the process.”

This was why Kairen killed a Dragon with helpers. They used the corpse to research a way they could make weapons with Dragon Demon magic imbued within it. These two Dragon Swords were the result of over 30 years of research.

“.....”

Azell was speechless.

‘This basically means they completely forgot about the Dragon Slayer's ritual and the Dragon Maqi....’



At the time of the Dragon Demon war, Azell wasn't the only user of the Dragon Maqi. If he included those killed in the war, there were 20 of them. Yet, all the records about them and the Dragon Maqi disappeared?

Even if the fall of the Nadick Empire caused confusion, and the great darkness was present, everything about this was unnatural. His suspicion deepened as he suspected the Dragon Demon King's worshippers secretly severed the knowledge on this subject.

‘Anyways, they tried to duplicate the Dragon Maqi using such a method. Impressive.’

If Carlos had been alive, Azell wanted to hear his opinion on this subject. At the time, Carlos thought about mass producing large and beautiful magical energy, but he had never thought about reproducing the quick flames of the Dragon Maqi. This attempt at replicating Dragon Maqi came at an era when all the knowledge about the Dragon Maqi had been severed.

Kairen spoke.

“Now it's your turn.”

“Do you know the goal of the mages to seek for a way to ultimately save mankind?”

“I know about it. The great flood of the world raked across this world, and it forever left a wound on this world.”

It was what every magician wanted. They wanted to changed the world with their own magic.

This wasn't a figure of speech. The magicians genuinely believed they could changed the world through magic. They weren't trying to use magic to change how a person thinks or acts. They wanted to change the fundamental laws of the world.

Azell spoke.

“You like speaking in poetic expressions.”

“My magician friends are all full of pretentiousness. It’s almost pathological. If one was a talented magician, one must act with bluster to meet the expectation of the masses. This is a tradition passed down by the Archmage Carlos... Mmm? What's wrong? Why is your expression like that?”

“...no. It's nothing.”

For a moment, he almost let out a choking sound. Carlos had always spoke that way when he was bragging about himself.

‘No way. Everything about the Dragon Slayer's ritual and Dragon Maqi was forgotten yet such words from Carlos survived? Moreover, it had turned into a tradition?

It really was a terrible thing. Azell spoke as his body shuddered.

“The magicians sincerely believe such works are possible. Moreover, the Dragon Slayer's ritual is the proof.”

“Mmmm?”

“Since time immemorial, a great magician made a deal that was both beneficial to the humans and the dragons. Humans thirsted for strength, and the dragons thirsted for wisdom. The ritual puts what both sides wants on the line.”

It was a promise made between the two races. At the same time, it was made into a law of this world.

Unlike the humans, Dragons didn't pass down their knowledge. However, all the Dragons including the newly born Dragons knew about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Kairen's eyes opened as if he couldn't believe what he had just heard.

"What kind of nonsensical story is that?"

“Anyways, this is the only answer I can give to the question posed by you.”

“Mmmm.....”

Kairen frowned. It sounded like a fantastical delusion, but he didn't have any evidence to dispute what he had been told. Azell referenced the Dragon Slayer's ritual in his fight against the Earth Dragon to get its attention, and the Dragon Demon King's worshippers obsessed over this fact.

Kairen asked a question.

“So let's say anyone could go look for a dragon, and they initiate the Dragon Slayer's ritual. Do you mean to say the Dragon's power could be obtained by winning a one-on-one battle to the death?”

“Not everyone could do it. It is only possible for humans. Ah, it is possible for the Dragon Demons(TLN:Dragon Majins) to do it. They barely qualify for the requirement needed for the contract..”

“Basically, it's impossible for me to test it out?”

“Yes.”

“Hmmm... It's hard to believe that story.”

Kairen grumbled, but he didn't ask any more questions. After thinking for a brief moment, Kairen stood up.

“Let's end this here today.”

“Are you sure that's all for today?”

“Yes.”

Kairen didn't speak any further, and he returned to lie down in his beddings. Then he immediately fell asleep.

Azell look at him for a brief moment before he turned his gaze towards the campfire as he started to think.

‘The Dragon Slayer's ritual.....’

He suddenly thought about the conversation he had in the past.

## 5

He had a dream.

He acknowledged it happened far from the current world. It was a memory from the distant past.

‘Ah. It was right around this time.’

As a high level Spirit Order Practitioner, he could guide the intent of his dreams. He could also change the content of his dreams. During the process of gaining control over his mind, he had learned a technique where he could create a dream using a

specific memory.

Azell used this technique to recreate a snippet of his past as a dream.

“I'll change the world someday.”

He had a friend who always said those words.

If someone else had said it, he would have laughed it off after calling the person out as being immature. However, this was Carlos. It wasn't a dream of an immature boy, who was ignorant of reality. Azell acknowledged the dreams of those with the ability to achieve it.

This was why Azell asked the question.

“How do you want to change it?”

“Mmm. I haven't come up with a concrete idea yet. What I can do and what I want to do isn't matching up yet.”

“What if we could prevent those of the Dragon Demon race from being born into this world?”

“If that was possible, then this damn war would be over. However, the birth of the Dragon Demon race itself was caused by magic changing the world. I'm not sure it'll be possible to reverse

that change. Still, it is something worth researching about.”

The magicians considered the birth of the Dragon Demon race to be the result of a mighty magic. It was the very first magic that made an indelible imprint on this world. Moreover, everyone believed the Dragon Demon King Atein was the founder of mages.

Azell snorted.

“Don't take my words too seriously. How would it be possible to change the entire race into being sterile?”

“...is that how you see it? It seems I have to throw away my opinion that you are a dumb swordsman. It seems you are quite extraordinary?”

Carlos was astonished. Then he spoke as if suddenly thought of something.

“Still, it might be possible using another method. Like the Dragon Slayer's ritual, we might be able to impose a contract between humans and the Dragon Demon race....”

“The Dragon Slayer's ritual. I don't know what that particular mage was thinking when he made that up.”

“You, who have benefited the most from the Dragon Slayer's ritual, shouldn't speak of it in those terms.”

“The fact that I benefited from the ritual is a separate issue. Still, what kind of a person thought up a ritual where a human has to fight against a Dragon one-on-one? Did he think it was fair fight?”

“The mage was too much of a romantic. I think he believed good would always triumph over everything.”

“What?”

Azell looked at Carlos as if he had heard something outrageous. Carlos let out a bitter laugh.

“I know it sounds strange... However, I really think that was his mindset. The mage was blinded by his romanticized ideals.”

“What makes you say that?”

“The era when the Dragon Slayer's ritual was formed was much more barbaric.... Moreover, the relationship between the humans and Dragons were completely different.”

The Dragons used to live in places where humanity had never trodden. It was rare for them to show themselves to the world. However, Carlos had researched the old records. He found out that the Dragons were entirely different being before the Dragon Slayer's ritual.



“In the past, the Dragon had no natural enemies, so they were the tyrants of nature. They didn't hesitate to expand their territories, and any humans in their path was ruthlessly killed.

Moreover, at the time, humans had no way of stopping the Dragons.

“Through the Dragon Slayer's ritual, the Dragons learned humans were beings worthy of respect. Moreover, when there were problems at the time, people didn't think through it logically like today. That bastard killed a member of your family? Then you have the right to strike him down with a rock. You have a problem? Then the person, who wins in the fight, was in the right. The world worked in such a way.”

“It doesn't sound too different from the current times?”

Even in Azell's era, the monarchs all insisted they were in the right. If one said the other was wrong, then war would be waged. The knights insulted each other as battle raged.

Carlos laughed bitterly.

“It was way worse back then. At least, the losing side doesn't lose their women to be raped any more. In the past, it didn't matter if they were children or adult. People have enough rights where such acts don't happen any more.”

“Somewhere in this world, people still live that way.”

“In that era, that way of life was the norm. They didn’t even have a common language where the two races to communicate with each other, yet they were able to come up with a ritual that involved a one-on-one battle. It changed the relationship between the two races dramatically.... If both sides didn't have good intent in their heart, it would have been impossible to achieve such a feat.”

“So you are saying it was a very barbaric era, and the ritual was in line with the common sense of that time?”

“Yes. They thought and acted in an entirely different way from our era.”

“I think your explanation is extremely romanticized... Well, whatever.”

Azell needed a lot of power to win against his enemies in the Dragon Demon war. This was why he challenged Dragons to take their powers. He washed blood with blood as he stole the Dragon's power. From his perspective, he couldn't agree with Carlos' explanation.

“Someday I will change the world....”

Carlos spoke as he looked into the distance.

“I want to turn the bad part into good. After this damn war ends,

I... I want to change the world for somebody.”

“You should drop that line as you look profoundly into your lover.”

Azell grumbled.

# Chapter 48 - Guardian Shadows (1)

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## 1

Niberis was inside the darkness, lost in her feeling of humiliation.

-I never expected this to turn out like this.

A voice flew in from a distance location.

-We suffered a great loss... Now that it has turned out like this, we have to give up on the Dragon Demon Princess.

-We have no choice, since the Dragon Sword Duke has appeared. Now that the 'Guardian Shadows' are on the move, we can't provoke them any longer.

-We needed to quickly kidnap the Dragon Demon Princess before this happens... At the very least, we are fortunate, since we didn't lose Niberis.

-Sir Duran. I express my respects to you for your wise decision.

“It was nothing.”

Duran, who was in the same room as Niberis, responded with

humility.

He was originally on a different mission inside the Rulain Kingdom. However, when he received the information about the Dragon Sword Duke leaving his territory to head towards the Dragon Demon Princess, he moved quickly. If he had delayed his travels even by a little bit, he would have been late.

-Niberis.

“Yes.”

-Do not be devastated by this. This was within the parameter of our predictions. It isn't as if we didn't gain anything from this.

“What did you just say?”

Niberis eyebrows rose. The higher ups sent her out even though they had anticipated that she might fail?

-Our foundation within the Rulain Kingdom is especially frail. This is why we don't have much information regarding what goes on inside the kingdom. This is why he didn't know about the magic placed on the Dragon Demon Princess.

-In the first place, you were sent on a gambit with a low probability. The fact that you came back without injury proves that you are outstanding.

Niberis pride was strong, and she had wanted to prove her skill by kidnapping the Dragon Demon Princess. She hadn't considered that this task would be hard. However, she was one of the younger members of the organizations. Unlike her, the hidden elders knew how scary the world could be.

The plan had been to kidnap a member of the royal family in secret. They had to prevent their hidden, secret organization from being exposed to the world at all costs. Even with perfect preparations, this mission wasn't considered to be a given. They had gone forward with minimal information, so the the outcome shouldn't have surprised them.

-First, pull back from the Rulain Kingdom with Duran.

“But.....”

-Since we've been exposed to the Dragon Sword Duke, the Rulain Kingdom's Guardian Shadows will be on the move. You still don't know how scary they could be.

This mission didn't simply end without consequences when they had failed to kidnap the Dragon Demon Princess. Now, the enemy knew the information the organization had been desperately trying to keep a secret. It was the fact that they had powerful pieces like Niberis and Duran within their organization. This information was now known to the enemies.

-We'll give you an opportunity to make up for this business at a

later date. Pull back for now.

“Mmmm.....”

Niberis was dissatisfied, but the elders' attitude was too resolute. She couldn't be stubborn. She bit her lips.

‘Who cares about the Dragon Sword Duke...’

Currently, she regretted immediately running away in surprise when then the Dragon Sword Duke appeared. If she had joined powers with Duran, she thought that they could have easily suppress him...

-We'll leave everything to you, Sir Duran.

“Understood.”

After hearing Duran's answer, the elders' voices became more distant. When the silence settled into the darkness, Duran spoke to Niberis.

“Miss. I understand your feeling.”

“...What do you understand?”

“You can't accept the reason why we have to work to this extent

to ensure our safety.”

“.....”

“However, you have to understand there is a reason why we are so afraid. The Guardian Shadows are a legitimately scary existence. If we didn't didn't have any reasons to fear them, we would have already conquered the world.”

In truth, they had almost succeeded once before. They actively imposed their influence on the entire continent as they revised the continent's history. Their goal had been to wipe out all the knowledge that could be passed on.

“We have to finish our preparation for the day our king returns... Then the world will be afraid of us.”

Duran thought about the past as he stroked his face. Inside the darkness, his hand touched his wrinkled face and he felt the permanent scars that couldn't be erased. It had been etched onto him like brands.

## 2

After meeting up with Kairen, they spent a single night inside the forest. Then, the party moved at a slow pace. The party decided they didn't need to be worried about the enemies attacking them.



They arrived at a country village after crossing the mountain. They purchased a sickly horse and a run-down carriage there. It was very questionable to call it a carriage, but they were able to reach the busiest city in the vicinity because of it.

“I guess I have to say goodbye to this carriage.”

Azell spoke as he walked alongside the carriage. The party had acquired the carriage for Enora. If they had to travel matching Enora's foot speed, it would have taken them two to four additional days to get here.

While they were coming here, Kairen's attitude took Azell by surprise.

‘He is a Duke yet he is very easy going.’

He had traveled with them until this point, but the Duke didn't show any signs of discontent. Everyone was uncomfortable around him as they kept their eyes on Kairen. However, he didn't show any signs of discontent at the shabby carriage or the slow travel speed.

Arrieta laughed when Azell brought up this point.

“My teacher still goes into the mountain occasionally to live like an uncivilized person when he feels like it. He wouldn't show any displeasure at such a minor setback.”

“Even though he is a Duke?”

“He said he liked. He could turn his surrounding inside out since he was able to use his strength in earnest. That is why I had to learn how to live out in the wild from time to time. We lived in a very impoverished state when we were in the mountains.”

“I understand now.”

He was the one responsible for giving such lessons to Arrieta. It shouldn't have surprised Azell that the Duke acted in an informal manner. It was incongruous with his station.

The party checked into an inn that geared towards serving nobles.

Azell asked Arrieta a question.

“Don't we have to visit the lord here?”

“There is no lord in this territory.”

“What?”

“Count Renning is working from the palace, so one of his relative is working here as a proxy. If we go to him, we'll be treated well. However, it would be annoying and our schedule would be further delayed..”

Azell looked towards Kairen, but it seemed he was of the same mind as Arrieta. The teacher and the student didn't want a raucous reception even though they were both of very high stations. They were very similar in the fact that they hated those kinds of events.

Enora spoke to Azell.

“Sir Azell. Could you accompany me on my errand?”

“Huh? Where are you going?”

“I have to buy various items, and I'm going to see if we can hire a healer.”

“Ah ah. You want me as a mule.”

“Wouldn't it better if you thought of it as guarding me?”

“In the end, I'll probably have to carry everything. You want to take only me?”

“Yes.”

“Why? What about Sir Boar and Sir Giles?”

“Mmmm. That is.....”

Enora laughed as if she was put in an awkward situation.

“They both do not know about how the world works. Also, problem might arise if the identity of the princess and the duke was spread....”

“.....”

It really was a cold assessment. However, Azell could only agree with her.

Boar and Giles gave off signs of being a noble's sheltered son. This had been very obvious with Boar, but Azell thought Giles was also a bit ignorant of the world. Nothing good could come out of them accidentally letting something slip to a civilian.

‘Mmmm?’

He exited the inn with Enora and suddenly felt someone's gaze on him. He subtly turned his head, but he didn't see anyone.

‘These bastards are very talented in hiding themselves. Maybe they are Dragon Demon King worshipers?’

Even if he couldn't see anyone, Azell wasn't fooled. He was sure someone was watching him. It wasn't just one person. There were several of them. At a glance, he couldn't locate them. It meant they

were very adept at hiding themselves.

‘Hmm. Even if they are Dragon Demon King worshippers, they aren't a problem since the Dragon Sword Duke is with Arrieta.’

Azell and Enora were the ones in trouble. If they ran into a problem, he had to make sure Enora would be unhurt.

Azell walked as these thoughts ran through his head when Enora asked him a question.

“What are you thinking about?”

“Mmm? I'm not really thinking about anything. Why?”

“You are looking at the people with amazement in your eyes.”

“Did I really do that?”

Azell was confused. Did his eyes unconsciously give something away?

It was understandable. Two hundred years had passed since his era. He couldn't help but marvel at the sight of the city. It looked similar from before, but there were also a lot of unfamiliar sights.

He had been very busy recently, but Azell had been thrown into

this world less than 1 month ago. He tried to accept and adapt to his situation, but at times, he couldn't help but become overwhelmed by what he felt.

Enora spoke.

“Oh yea, Sir Azell. There is something I want to tell you.”

“What is it?”

“Thank you..”

“.....”

“You protected the princess and I. Moreover... Thank you for taking care of me at night.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.”

Azell feigned ignorance, which caused Enora to puff up her cheeks.

“I know all about it.”

“What exactly do you know about?”

“The content of my dreams were blatantly changed. Did you

think I wouldn't notice? It's all Sir Azell's doing.”

After being ambushed by Niberis, Enora had been gripped by nightmares. No matter how brave she was, Enora was still a young girl. She couldn't stay composed after experiencing such an event.

However, she was tormented by her nightmares for only a moment. From a certain point in time, her nightmares disappeared, and it was replaced with peaceful memories of her past. She saw the plains of her homeland she loved, and she remembered the fun times she had playing there.

No matter how she saw it, she couldn't help but notice that someone had manipulated her dreams. She didn't know about Spirit Order or magic, but there was something Enora was sure of.

Azell spoke.

“I'm not a magician, so how could I manipulate someone else's dream?”

“You can do it.”

“Eh-ee. I can't”

“I already know you can do it. I felt it. It was Sir Azell.”

“Mmm? You felt it?”

“Every person has a different feel to them. I felt your signature, Sir Azell.”

“.....”

Azell was a bit surprised as he looked at Enora.

She was right. Azell had manipulated her dreams. Since he was intervening with a normal person's mind, he hadn't been cautious. He hadn't been careful to change the content of the dream within its natural flow. Instead he had forcefully guided her dreams towards comforting memories. He also didn't erase the scent of his energy within the subconsciousness of her sleeping mind.

Still, it was surprising for a normal person like Enora to feel his energy.

Enora spoke.

“Anyways, I just want to say thank you. Sir Azell is really good at taking care of other people. Do you perhaps have a lot of siblings?”

“No. I don't have any siblings... Although, I do have kids.”

“So that's how it is... Eh-ehk?”

Enora was naturally nodding her head, when she became



surprised. He had children? Azell was a married man?

“My god. You are married?”

“Does it look like I'm married?”

“I never thought about it. You are old enough that it wouldn't be strange if you were wed, but...”

It was the same in Azell's era. One went through one's coming-of-age ceremony at fifteen, and most married before one reached twenty years old. If Azell was a noble, it would be rare to find an unmarried man of his age.

Azell spoke.

“I'm not married.”

“Then how do you have children?”

Enora's gaze was turning curious as she looked at Azell. Azell grinned.

## Chapter 49 - Guardian Shadows (2)

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“Don't look at me like that with those eyes. They were adopted.”

“Adopted children?”

“The children became orphans for various reasons, but I adopted them. Actually, there were other people, who acted as their actual parents.....”

Still, the children was a shining beacon in his memories.

During the Dragon Demon War, Azell had seen a lot of tragedy. During this time, he had adopted children, whose fate brushed against his, and he had sent them to the lands owned by him, Marquis Karzark.

After he killed Atein to end the Dragon Demon war, he was slowly dying from the curse. So he had retreated back into his territories for 2 years.

During that time, he had made a lot of memories with his adopted children. They were like a real family during that time.

He rode horses with them. They raced across the plains, and they found secret locations where other people wouldn't even dare to visit. He also taught them martial arts... There was once a time when he had lived in such a way.

Enora, who had listened without interrupting him, spoke.

“Sir Azell must have been a noble.”

“Is that so?”

“Unless you are a noble, the activities you described is impossible. Moreover, it sounds like your family was prosperous. You really can't remember the details?”

“Yes. I really want to remember it all.”

“If I really turn out to be a noble, Ms. Enora has to treat me well?”

“Mmm. So I just have to stop calling you ahjushi?”

“You are pretty quick on the uptake.”

Azell couldn't help, but laugh when Enora looked up at him in a cute manner.

### 3

After purchasing the items, they visited a clinic. When they returned to their place of lodging with the healer, the sun was setting.

Enora spoke in an excited manner.

“Wow. I want to always shop with someone like Sir Azell.”

“So you want a strong servant?”

Azell grumbled.

While they walked, she had bought needed travel items, and ingredients for food. The amount she bought wasn't a joke. These items would be divvied up between the horses during the travel, yet he had to hold it all right now by himself. Azell held a burden that was bigger than the size of his body. He acrobatically held it all with both hands, which caused a spectacle. People in the street stopped to watch him.

Giles was surprised at the amount of luggage Azell had brought.

“You carried all of this by yourself... Maybe we should have gone too?”

“I didn't know she would buy this much.”

He couldn't tell Giles about Enora's cold assessment of him, so Azell gave an ambiguous answer.

Enora and the healer went to meet Arrieta, and Azell went out to

the garden in the back of the inn. Since this place catered to the nobles, the building was luxurious, and it had a pretty large garden.

“Hmmm.”

He found Kairen there. The man had taken off his armor, and he had hidden his horn, ears and Dragon Demon stone. Kairen sat in an outdoor table disguised as a human, and he was drinking alcohol.

Azell spoke.

“That's quite the disguise.”

“If I show my real appearance in such a crowded place, it would be annoying to operate in that location.”

Unlike Arrieta, who was basically a propaganda tool for the throne, Kairen often worked under the radar. This was why he spent a lot of his money making this personal magic tool that disguised his outer appearance.

Kairen queried.

“Did you bring a healer?”

“Yes. Ms. Enora created a big fuss asking for a female healer, so it

took some time.”

“She is young, but she is quite good at her job. Do you want a cup?”

“I won't refuse, but... Do you think I can ask you a question before that?”

“By the way you are speaking, it seems your words will make me lose appetite for alcohol... What if I say no?”

“Then I won't ask.”

“If you are meekly backing off like this, then it must not be something important.”

“No. I'll just give up on getting a glass of alcohol from the duke, then I'll pursue the matter by myself. They seem to outstanding at hiding themselves, but if I chase after them myself...”

“.....”

In a flash, the atmosphere froze.

Azell looked at him with a smiling face, and Kairen glared back with a rigid expression on his face. The pressure emitted by him was so enormous that the air started to vibrate a little bit.

However, Azell sloughed it off nonchalantly.

Kairen spoke.

“...you are quite adept at fending off my pressure. You are like a ghost, and it’s putting me in a foul mood.”

“I've had a lot of occasions where I received such pressures. If I'm flattened by this, then I would have been dead long ago.”

“You are really too impudent. Normally, a person would be too afraid at the prospect of dying.”

“If you are someone I could deal with by being polite, we wouldn't even be having this conversation. To tell you the truth...”

Azell sat across Kairen without asking for permission.

“Shouldn't I be a bit suspicious? There are unseen beings circling around us. Our party members don't know about their existence, yet their presence disappeared after meeting with you.”

“.....”

“It hasn't been too long since we were monitored and chased by the Dragon Demon King worshippers. I believe I have valid reasons to bring up this issue even though it might sour your taste for the alcohol.”

“Hooo.....”

Kairen tossed the rest of the alcohol into his mouth as if he was annoyed. Then he glared at Azell.

It was at that moment.

「Dragon Demon magic.....」

Azell flinched. Between the trees of the garden, he heard a voice that was akin to children whispering.

‘He was this close to me?’

The voice was coming from a location only 20 meters away from Azell. How could he not realize someone had gotten so close to him?

「You are a human yet... The well of Dragon Demon Magic...」

He was sure a single person was speaking, yet it sounded as if multiple people were whispering at the same time. It was a very strange voice. He would be a great subject for a horror story for the masses.

Azell glared at the location with sharp eyes.



“Is he a specter?”

The other person wasn't a human. He was sure of it.

The person had on a similar outfit as those from the Dragon's Shadow. He had a white robe with a hood covering his face. The shadow casted by the hood obscured his face.

That wasn't the only oddity. Below the robe, Azell couldn't see his feet, and no hands were protruding out from his sleeves.

‘How strange. Is there a real body underneath the robe?’

Azell furrowed his eyebrows, then he awakened his magic. Slowly, he moved, so his opponent wouldn't realize it. He stealthily...

‘Yet this.... This feeling isn't wholly unfamiliar. What is this?’

The faceless specter's presence agitated some memory in Azell's mind. He was sure this was the first time he'd seen this being yet he felt a sense of deja vu.

At that moment, Kairen spoke.

“Stop it. He isn't an enemy.”

“...do you really think I would believe those words?”

Suddenly, another being could be detected by Azell's senses. He had appeared like a ghost, and he had the same outfit as the first specter. The only difference was the size of their body. One was small like a child, and the other was a giant over 2 meters tall.

As they glided across the floor, they spoke in their whispering voices.

「Is he a defender of the prophecy... No.....」

「Still, he has it. The Dragon Demon magic...」

「Strange.....」

「Very strange.....」

「This kind of human hasn't existed for a long time.....」

Azell couldn't see their faces, but he knew they were speaking about him. He could feel their gaze. Their eyes bore into Azell...

Kairen spoke.

“Stop there. If you approach any further... This friend might

attack you.”

「We won't die easily.....」

“However, it isn't as if you can't be killed. Don't you have unfinished businesses? It would be best if you don't do anything that might result in you losing your strength.”

「He isn't... He isn't strong enough to harm us.....」

「However... He has Dragon Demon magic.」

「He is hiding it.....」

「Maybe we aren't reading him correctly.....」

「A human... There used to be.....」

「Really.....?」

「Long time ago.....」

They babbled as if they weren't sane. However, they circled around at a distance of 10 meters, and they didn't approach Azell any further.

Kairen spoke.

“That's surprising. I've never seen them show so much interest in a single person.”

“What are they?”

Azell asked in a nonchalant manner. Of course, he circulated his magical energy inside, so he could attack at any given moment.

Kairen spoke.

“Guardian Shadows.”

“...you just gave me their name, and I still have no idea what they are.”

“It would be difficult for me to tell you anything more. The fact that you even know about their existence... It makes me wonder what I should do with you.”

The specter, who had kept his silence since he first appeared, spoke.

「You can tell him.....」

“What?”

Kairen was surprised. This meant the specter's words was quite out of the norm.

「He isn't connected with us... Maybe the prophecy.....」

“The prophecy? What is that?”

Kairen frowned as he asked the question, but the specters kept their mouths shut. Moreover, when the babbling by the specters stopped, a very ominous silence descended on them.

“Mmmm.....”

Kairen didn't like it, but it was pointless to glare at the Guardian Shadows. A common sense approach didn't work with them in the first place.

Eventually, Kairen gave up, and he gave an explanation to Azell.

“They are like a suppression system that prevents the Dragon Demon King worshippers from operating out in the open....”

“The Dragon Demon King worshippers can't reveal themselves because of these things?”

“Didn't you think what you experienced this time around was a bit unusual?”

Kairen answered a question with a question.

Azell queried.

“What do you mean?”

“The people, who ambushed your party, were very powerful. Each individual had a massive amount of power that is rarely seen. They easily used monsters as disposable soldiers. Why would those bastards with such power try so hard to hide their activities from the eyes of the people?”

“I'm not sure. Isn't it because they were just a small elite unit inside the secret organization?”

Truthfully, Azell didn't entirely grasp how everything operated in this era, so he didn't get the point Kairen's question was trying to make. If one possessed powerful strength, then one could cause chaos in the world even without the help of others. However, it seemed the Dragon's Shadow were trying to look out for their own safety. What was weird about that?

Kairen put on an expression as if he couldn't believe what Azell had said.

“Are you really dumber than I thought or did you really lose your memories?”

“It is the latter.”

“If you don't have anything worth saying then at the very least, think a little bit harder. If those bastards rampaged through the countryside, do you think anyone could stop them?”

“Mmm... There will be a massive loss of lives. Only after they caused massive damage will anyone with strength hear about it. Only after the fact will anyone chase after the culprit.”

Azell slowly understood what Kairen was trying to say.

Still, the power of the Dragon Demon King worshippers were a bit too strong for him to accept his explanation as the only reason.

Either Niberis and Duran could be considered a one-man army. The members of the Dragon's Shadow from the first ambush had enough power to demolish a small town in the countryside.

‘Moreover, they recruited the help of a dragon.’

They were capable of taking care of their own business. However, they used some method to train monsters to act as their hunting dogs, and they had been used as disposable soldiers. Moreover, a dragon was enticed to move on their behest.

“Now that I hear your words... They seem to be excessively cautious. However, isn't it because they are worried about the aftermath?”

## Chapter 50 - Guardian Shadows (3)

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“Why can't you accept this fact? For instance, when the woman named Niberis ambushed the party, why did she go through all the trouble of setting up a stage where there weren't many inhabitants? Truthfully, with the amount of power she possessed, couldn't she have easily wiped a country village off of the map, while conducting her business?”

“Mmm.....”

He was right. No matter how he looked at it he couldn't understand why Niberis went through such a complicated process to mount her surprise attack.

Kairen spoke.

“Those bastards have to be careful to avoid attention from human eyes. If humans other than the Dragon Demon King worshipers spotted them, then the Guardian Shadows will become aware of their existence. The Guardian Shadows will hunt them down.”

“What?”

“Ah. Of course, the system isn't foolproof. For example, I am a member of the Guardian Shadows. If I saw a Dragon Demon King Worshiper, then it is the same as all the Guardian Shadows witnessing it. However, if a civilian spots a Dragon Demon King Worshiper, there is a good chance the Guardian Shadows might



overlook it. However, as the number of spectator increases, the chance of the Guardian Shadows noticing goes up.”

“No. Wait a moment. That wasn't the question I wanted to ask you.”

“What is it?”

“It is as if you said.....”

Azell understood the meaning of Kairen's words, so he shuddered.

“The clueless civilians... Anyone who isn't a Dragon Demon King Worshiper is being used as surveillance network?”

“Yes..”

Azell was struck dumb.

## 4

Azell almost never showed his unrest, but he couldn't help looking at Kairen with a dumbfounded expression.

Who could do such a thing? Excluding the Dragon Demon King worshipers, someone was using everyone as a tool for surveillance?

Moreover, this person used the information to move these ghost-like apparitions to stop the Dragon Demon King worshipers?

If the person capable of pulling this off said he was a god, Azell would have believed it.

After a moment, Azell asked a question.

“Do you really think that makes any sense?”

“I understand my explanation might sound like bullshit.”

“So?”

“The problem is it is the truth. I know it's hard to believe. Even I had a hard time believing it.”

“.....”

“The Guardian Shadows exist to stop the prophecy told by the Dragon Demon King worshipers.”

“Prophecy?”

“There is a prophecy saying that the Dragon Demon King Atein will overcome death to return to this land, and he will make world right.”

“It really sounds like a prophecy that would be given by an evil church.”

“Isn't it? However, those bastards accept it as absolute truth, so they are growing their power for that days to come. Unfortunately, unlike the other evil churches, they have a great amount of power... There are too many organizations to grasp anything of substance.”

“There are a lot of organizations?”

Azell was confused, so he asked the question. There were a lot of organizations, not members?

Kairen spoke.

“Yes. For example, I've never heard of the 'Dragon's Shadow', who ambushed you guys. They seem to be an organization with a level-head and some ambition, and they had high quality troops.”

Azell could easily take care of them, but all of the Dragon's Shadow members that showed up would be able to suppress the likes of Giles and Boar. Boar and Giles were Quadruple masters with powerful battle capability, but the opponents were a step above them. Each of them were capable enough to easily deal with Arrieta.

“It is well known that their headquarters are located in the Field

of Darkness, but... The members of the Dragon Demon King worshipers are divided into numerous organizations. They are structured in a very complex manner. Even if there were a lot of them, no one knows which organizations are the core groups. It makes it hard to deal with the Dragon Demon King worshipers.”

“Hmmm....”

“If it wasn't for the Guardian Shadows, the world would be in a worse place right now. Moreover, the Dragon Demon King worshipers would boldly act out in the open.”

“Mmmm. Still, there is a part I don't understand.”

“What is it?”

“When the Dragon's Shadow ambushed the princess, we found out the ambushers were Dragon Demon King worshipers. However, the Guardian Shadows didn't show up.”

“When you guys realized who they were, were the Southern Border Guards with you?”

“No. It was only the four of us including the princess and I.”

“That's probably why. Didn't I tell you in the beginning? This system isn't foolproof. There is a higher chance the Guardian Shadows will realize what is happening when numerous people witness the event. Moreover, the more people there are the more

detailed report they could get. Instead of the countryside, the surveillance net is much stronger in a major city. It can't be helped, but the power of the surveillance is weakened in a place like the Balan Forest.”

“Hmm. I guess so.”

When he heard Kairen's explanation, he understood why the Dragon Demon King worshipers acted the way they did. They had attacked the party at the Balan forest and the mountain road where there weren't a lot of people. Moreover, they even tried to seal off an area from any outside observation. This was all done, because they were afraid of the Guardian Shadows.....

Azell queried.

“So who made such an amazing system? I would believe it if you said it was made by the god of magic.”

“I have no idea.”

“What?”

“I have no idea where the Guardian Shadows were born from. Someone might know what's the driving force behind them is, but I'm not the one in the know.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Guardian Shadows choose their successors from the living. However, it isn't as if we all know who the other members are....”

“Basically, you can't really call it an organization. The whole thing is a mess.”

“I can't deny your statement. It is as it is. There are only 5 people in this country, who know about them.”

“Are you included in this number??”

“Yes.”

“There are only 5.....”

“Each one of us are equal to 100 warriors, and we have vast influence over the world. However, we aren't enough to stop the Dragon Demon King worshipers. This is why the Guardian Shadows exist.”

“The Guardian Shadow is the name of your organization, and it also is the name of these two beings?”

“Yes.”

“Hmmm.....”

Azell frowned as he looked at the Guardian Shadows. No matter how he tried he couldn't discern their true forms. It had been a really long time since he had felt these emotions.

Kairen asked the Guardian Shadows.

“Do you want this friend to join as a member of the Guardian Shadows?”

This must be the reason why they showed themselves. It must be why they wanted him to give an explanation. The Guardian Shadows weren't capable of giving precise explanations, so members like Kairen had to explain everything to his fellow comrades.

‘Of course, in the case I refused the offer, I had to swear a pact of silence before I heard their pitch.’

The pact of silence was a magic rite, and even Kairen couldn't break it.

They had revealed the truth to Azell without making the pact, so truthfully, Kairen was a little bit annoyed. There were too many quirks in their actions that he couldn't comprehend their actions.

「No.....」

“What?”

「Not right now... Not yet.....」

「We will watch.....」

After saying those words, the Guardian Shadows disappeared like smoke.

Azell spoke within the silence.

“They suddenly appear and disappear out of thin air. Moreover, they put a geas on people, so people can't approach them.”

“They are like the Dragon Demon King worshipers where they try their best to hide from the masses.”

From the moment the Guardian Shadows showed up, no one entered the garden. Moreover, even those who looked out the windows from the other buildings saw an intricately disguised illusion instead of reality. The Guardian Shadows had casted a barrier around them.

Kairen continued to speak.

“Anyways... They only show themselves to the members of the organization. This time they came here because of me. They received direction information from me instead of the people.”



“Can you have a proper conversation with them?”

“Sometimes it is hard to understand their words, but they understand my words. Of course, I'm not sure about that fact either.”

“Hmmm.”

“I have no idea why they revealed themselves, while putting their trust in you.”

“Anyways, doesn't this prove I'm a trustworthy person regarding the Dragon Demon King worshipers?”

“Mmm.....”

Kairen put on a dissatisfied expression at those words. He looked at Azell for a moment, then he spoke.

“Unfortunately, you are right..”

“I don't know how I should feel about you adding, 'Unfortunately', to those words..”

“Shut up. Just let me pour you some alcohol.”

Kairen grumbled as he poured Azell the alcohol.

## 5

After obtaining horses, and equipments needed for the journey, the pace of the travel increased once again. They had already left the territory of the Southern Border Guards, and Boar took on the role of deciding which roads they should take.

“We were delayed two days from our original schedule. It would be best if we restocked our food from the Marquis Ventar.”

“We'll do so.”

Arrieta passively accepted the suggestion. Before she would have chosen the quickest route, but they could travel at a leisurely pace, since Kairen had joined them.

After several days, Boar and Giles started to get antsy. They had recuperated for couple days after feeling the aftereffects of battle, but the two of them were martial artists in their prime. They lived to train their body, so they were overflowing with energy from just riding the horses.

On the fourth day, they were almost at the Marquis Ventar's territory, and Azell once again started his sparring sessions with Giles and Boar.

“Since you guys weren't annoying me these days, I was having a good time.”

“Stop being so heartless. Although, Sir Azell does have the skill to back up your behavior.”

Boar grumbled. Now Boar was able to interact with others in a comfortable manner.

Giles smirked as he butted in.

“Since Sir Azell finds us annoying, why don't we play by ourselves?”

“That might be the better option. Sir Azell could entertain the princess.”

“Hey. Hey.”

Before anyone knew it, Giles and Boar had become friends, and Azell could only look on in disbelief. When they were departing for the trip, their relationship had been very rocky. After experiencing several life and death situations, they must have gotten quite close.

It was at that moment.

“A training session... Do you mind if I join?”

“Uh. D...duke?”

Boar was surprised. Before anyone knew it, Kairen had appeared. Boar spoke in a humble manner.

“How can we dare.....”

“I heard from Arrieta that you guys entertained that child. Why would it be different with me?”

Kairen put on a wide smile. He was called the Dragon Sword Duke, and in his territory, he sparred frequently with the knights under his command. The Duke wanted to train himself, but he also wanted to give instructions to his knights.

“I'm used to participating in sparring matches. You won't be injured from me using excessive force.”

“But.....”

“In my territory, people line up to spar with me. Now that I come outside, I'm treated like cold rice.”

“That isn't true. The fact that the Duke is willing to spar us is an honor in itself.”

Giles and Boar displayed a grateful attitude. Kairen was a living legend in the Rulain Kingdom, and he was the idol of every young

knight.

# Chapter 51 - Guardian Shadows (4)

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Kairen only unsheathed one of his two swords. As if he had been planning on joining this practice session, he already had his armor on.

The moment he saw the Dragon Sword, Azell thought about Arrieta's sword.

'It seems the princess' sword was made in imitation of this sword.'

The Dragon Sword and Arrieta's sword looked alike. The hilt and the blade looked different, but both the swords held a white glow. Unlike Arrieta's sword, his sword wasn't curved. It was a double-edged longsword. The hilt looked like a dragon with wings, making it look like a ceremonial sword instead of a weapon used in fighting.

'The blade must be made out of Dragon bones.'

Kairen's Dragon Swords were entirely made out of ingredients harvested from a Dragon's corpse. The sword was probably manufactured using magical means on the Dragon's bones.

Kairen spoke.

"Let's play a little bit. Truthfully, I've been a bit bored. Who wants to go first?"

Giles stepped forward first. In a flash, Boar's expression hardened, since he had lost the initiative. Azell laughed.

‘A Dragon Sword.’

Azell eyed Kairen's sword. Since he carried a pair of swords, Azell inferred Kairen was a dual sword user. He only took out a single sword to enjoy the sparring session, since there was a huge gap between his opponent and him. If he wanted to show his true skill, he would use his dual swords.

‘His hands are in such conditions...’

Both of Kairen's hands were rough. He had countless callouses from wielding a sword. It was the hands of a person, who had swung the sword even if blisters had burst open on his hands.

‘Well, he is from the Dragon Demon race. Even if he is a dual sword user, he could sever bones with just a single hand.’

Dual sword wielding was rarely found within the knights. Truthfully, even if one also counted the mercenaries, there were that many people that used that style. The difficulty of learning the techniques were too high, and it was disadvantageous to use it against an armored opponent or a monster with a tough hide.

However, Azell had learned it in the process of searching far and wide for sword techniques, and he had even used it in real fights.

When he fought the Dragon's Shadow, he had used dual sword techniques with the sword he had hidden with his stealth skill.

Giles stepped forward enthusiastically.

“Ha-aht!”

“Good!”

Kairen was excited as he received Giles' attack, then he counterattacked.

The confrontation didn't last very long. Around the 20th exchange, Kairen's blade rested on Gile's neck.

“Ook. I've lost.”

“Your basic foundation is sturdy. You move well forward and backwards. However, you are clumsy at reacting to attacks from the sides. Keep that in mind for the future.”

“Thank you!”

Giles was moved since he was able to spar with him, and he also got a pointer from Kairen.

Azell smirked.



‘His advice was concise and to the point. It seemed he’s quite talented at teaching others.’

This opinion was reinforced by the fact that Kairen exchanged 20 blows with Giles. If he used his true skills, he could have won with a single exchange. However, this was a sparring match, so Kairen tried to bring out the best in Giles. Then he assessed his weaknesses.

Boar was next. He also lost after they exchanged around 20 blows, and Boar was able to hear Kairen's critique. Boar used a shield, so he was better than Giles in terms of defense.

However, he was dispatched without a problem by Kairen.

Kairen spoke as he looked at Azell.

“How about you?”

“If you want me to spar, then I'll give it a go.”

“You are acting hard to get. Why don't you follow the examples of these young men?”

“Ha ha ha. It might be because I've met the Duke only recently.”

Azell unsheathed his sword as he spoke those words.

It was true he had wanted to face Kairen at least once. He had completed dual banding his third Ring of Life yesterday, so he wanted see how much his battle capabilities had increased. Moreover, he needed an opportunity to evaluate his Senses.

Kairen spoke.

“Come at me.”

“Then... I won't decline.”

Azell showed his respects then he immediately went offensive stance.

## 6

‘He really doesn't like to lose.’

Kairen frowned. He had been planning on giving Azell the chance to attack him first. However, Azell approached him in a languid manner as if he was provoking Kairen. It was an attitude showing that Azell wanted to see who would give in and attack first. It got on Kairen's nerve, so he eventually took the first strike.

Chaeng!

After the issue of who would take the first strike was resolved, the two of them exchanged sword strikes at extreme speeds.

Kairen was fast, but Azell wasn't a slouch either. When Kairen fought Boar and Giles, he matched his own speed to theirs. However, he was steadily increasing his speed now.

Che-che-che-che-cheng!

Giles and Boar's eyes became wide as they saw the action. The two of them were moving at a speed they couldn't follow.

It was tight. Surprisingly, Azell was sparring against a living legend, yet he wasn't being pushed back at all.

Instead, as time passed, Kairen was being pushed back. Kairen was astonished.

‘I'm losing in terms of predicting the opponent's move?’

The exchange was so fast that it was hard to follow it with the naked eye. Still, even in such a situation, Azell was a half step in front of Kairen. He was able to see Kairen's moves, and he was able to make a move on the board accordingly.

As time passed, the cumulative effect of the exchanges mounted, and one could clearly see which side was advantaged and disadvantaged. It was evident after each blow that Kairen was faster. No. His movement, chained-moves and reaction was also

faster. Moreover, each of his moves were sharper.

Yet he was being pushed back by Azell.

It wasn't as if Azell's assault was at a level where Kairen couldn't deal with it. Both of them only strengthened their body and senses. This was a simple battle with a sword where Spirit Order and Dragon Qi wasn't being used... Azell was frighteningly controlling the situation to the minute detail, and Kairen was at a disadvantage against Azell.

It felt as if the answer had been predetermined. No, it felt as if his opponent was solving a problem where every advantage was given to him. If he stabbed, then his opponent would block it in a certain way. If he stabbed in a different way, than the opponent responded in kind. At the time, Kairen had thought he was making a move that would give him an advantage. Azell's advantageous moves stacked one after another, and Kairen was a hair breadth away from defeat.

‘Huh! Where the hell did a guy like this pop out from?’

After he got past his inexperienced and youthful period of time in his life, Kairen had never lost to anyone in terms of techniques. He was a master swordsman who had trained longer than a human's lifespan. However, unlike a human, time hadn't aged or weakened him. He still possessed a body in its prime.

However, he had met an opponent who was better than him in terms of technique. It had been several dozen years since he met

someone like that.

‘No. This isn't about the techniques....’

Kairen tried to find a more suitable expression.

‘Feel.’

Yes. It was his senses.

This didn't mean Azell was not using his intellect and moving based on his instinct. Didn't the word Sense have multiple meanings?

Each of Azell's sword techniques weren't close to perfect. His physical body was weak, and he lacked an edge.

However, he was able to assess and have a feel for the beat of the battle. Moreover, he could tie his senses to the the weapon he possessed, and he was able to manipulate the situation into outcomes he desired. He was showing an almost miraculous level of battle sense.

“Mmmm.”

In the next moment, Azell stopped his onslaught then he retreated backwards. Kairen had been completely outmatched, so he had been slowly forced into a corner. Kairen frowned.

“Are you trying to give me face?”

“That isn't it?”

“Huh?”

“I thought you would want to use your second sword right about now.”

“.....”

Kairen's expression crumpled into a frown. He took a deep breath, and he spoke after he calmed his heart.

“You know are well acquainted with how I feel.”

Soo-roo-roong.

Kairen unsheathed both Dragon Swords. There was a complete change in his spirit when he held both his swords.

Of course, Kairen was plenty strong with a single sword. However, it was rare to meet an opponent where he had to use his dual swords. He needed both to be able to defeat this opponent. This man was a true expert.

However, Azell... He wasn't an opponent he could defeat if he held back their killing intent and power. Kairen had to use dual swords to be able to defeat him in swordsmanship.

‘Such a young human has this much skill...’

Age, experience and training didn't always result in someone having a higher cultivation level in martial arts. Still, how could a human keep up with the long-lived Dragon Majin and the Dragon Demons? However, it wasn't like that in reality.

Humans go through a extreme amount of change in their limited life span. This mean experience and way of thought could influence a human to either become stronger or weaker. Kairen had witnessed a human possessing exceptional talent suffer a single defeat. Afterwards, the human desperately trained himself, but he worsened as time passed.

One had to know which path one wanted to take in life. It wasn't about being lazy or training in a repetitive manner. One had to find the correct method for oneself. It allowed one to work hard and it would stimulate oneself.

Kairen was sure Azell had walked down this path. Kairen had seen numerous geniuses, but Azell was a monster who was beyond his comprehension.

If Kairen knew of Azell's identity and what kind of life he had led, he would have understood why Azell was so skilled.

The Dragon Demon war was an incarnation of hell where it weeded out those who had participated in it. One didn't survive because one was strong. Being strong was a prerequisite in surviving the war, but one also needed luck.

Azell had great potential, and he had met many good teachers who had nurtured him. Moreover, he was able to survive, since his potential had been allowed to fully bloom.

The process of his development couldn't be assessed with reason and logic. The world had been conquered by evil. The confluence of events was something of a miracle, and it was something no one else could replicate again. In the end, a monster capable of killing the Dragon Demon King Atein had been born.

Suddenly, Kairen asked a question.

“What does the sword mean to you?”

“Mmmm? Why are you suddenly asking such a question?”

“Please answer my question.”

“It seems you like to talk from a philosophical point of view. The sword is a lethal weapon used to defeat enemies.”

“Your answer isn't very heroic.”



“I have never thought about composing my thoughts on what the sword means to me. It is a tool I use to achieve my goals.”

This was why Azell didn't mind his sword breaking. If one used a tool, there was always a chance it'll break. He didn't obsess over the ruined tool, rather he focused on how to acquire his next tool.

Kairen queried.

“So swordsmanship is just a way for you to kill people?”

“What answer do you want from me?”

“I want an honest answer.”

“Swordsmanship isn't just a method used to kill people.”

“Mmmm?”

Kairen was puzzled by the unexpected answer. Azell continued speaking.

“Swordsmanship is a technique that allows me to use the tool named a sword in a proficient manner. I don't see why I have to always use it with the intent of 'killing' something. My answer may be innocent, but I have a narrow point of view.”

“Huh huh. Should I say you views are too simplistic?”

“The simple answer is the best. If you want an answer that has a deeper meaning.... It is a game.”

“It's a game?”

“Yes. It's a game where I put my life on the line.”

Azell had become a swordsman since the sword was the strongest and most effective weapon. Moreover, he liked the sword and swordsmanship compared to the other disciplines of martial art.

He did things that was impossible for others. When he faced opponents, he always found a way to come out on top. He always challenged himself to obtain something that shouldn't be able to be achieved in such situations....

“That is what the sword means to me.”

“So, you just like swordsmanship. That's basically what you are saying. There is a saying: those who are talented can't beat the hard workers. Moreover, those who work hard can't overcome those who enjoy what they do.”

“It isn't a sentiment that I can entirely agree with.”

Azell smirked.

Kairen was strong. He had lived much longer than a human as a Dragon Demon, and he was passionately addicted to improving his swordsmanship. Kairen's techniques had reached an astonishing level.

‘If I looked at the completion of each of his techniques, he is on par with my heydays.’

At the time of the Dragon Demon war, this was the reason why he learned a diverse amount of techniques. No other Spirit Order practitioner was able to use as many variety of skills with his proficiency.

Of course, this meant his techniques weren't as complete as those who stuck to a single technique until it was perfected. However, he was able to chain various skills to optimize the usage of the skills. No one could reach his level of proficiency in this aspect.

‘Well, now... Should I experience his true skill?’

Kairen, who was using dual swords now, could be considered an entirely different person than the one he faced before. Azell's heart beat faster in anticipation. He would be able to experience Kairen's true skills.

## Chapter 52 - Guardian Shadows (5)

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Kairen spoke.

“Well... Since I've suffered a bit of a loss, I'll be attacking first.”

“Isn't it the duty of a senior to yield the first move?”

“I did so before. Didn't you turn down my offer?”

Kairen snorted as he attacked with his right sword.

Kairen wasn't planning on making any exploratory moves. This was why his strike was tremendously sharp. However, Azell read the trajectory, and reach of the attack beforehand, so he was able to dodge it by the slightest of margin.

Moreover, he attacked at the same time as Kairen was pulling back his sword. It was a perfect way to deal with such an attack, but the problem was Kairen was a dual swords user.

‘Got you.’

As if he had waited for this moment, Kairen counter-attacked with his left sword. It looked to be a perfect trap. At least, it looked like a perfect trap to Giles and Boar.

Azell hadn't forgotten Kairen was using two swords. There were

numerous types of sword techniques in existence, and there were a specific type of technique where the left and right hand acted as if it was attached to a different person. The hands moved independently of each other, and they showed ever-changing movements. Kairen was like that.

Azell had predicted his attack beforehand, so he accelerated a beat faster when the right sword was swung towards him.

Chaeng!

The sound rang out as sword clashed against sword. Surprisingly, it was Kairen, who retreated.

“...I've been had.”

Azell purposefully slowed down his speed. When he ran in to parry the right sword, he accelerated his speed in an instant. Kairen missed the spot he was aiming for, and Azell dug in towards the inside of his guard.

He waited for Kairen's counter-attack, and he returned a counter-attack of his own. Kairen was barely able to stop his stance from dissolving.

Kairen was in an ill humor, so he went on the offensive again.

His dual swords turned like a wind-up clock, and he started performing a very precise pattern of attack. It was fast, accurate,

and flashy. There wasn't much difference between each blow. There were sufficient power behind the two swords, and the two swords worked in perfect unison. Most opponents wouldn't even be able to untangle the flurry of movements.

However, Azell surprisingly reacted to such attacks in a natural manner. He moved his sword in the most efficient manner, and Kairen's sword slid off of his sword. Moreover, he moved back and forth to subtly control the distance from the dual swords. It cut off the rhythm of the dual swords being swung at him.

Che-eng!

Both of them moved in harmony as if they were dancing. After performing a breathtaking exchange of sword strikes, both of them took a step back. Kairen smiled.

“Your reaction to my attacks are very natural. Have you ever fought against a dual sword techniques?”

“I'm quite familiar with it.”

Azell had experience fighting against a very diverse type of dual sword techniques.

The techniques differed depending on the region one was in, and the types of weapons used. It also differed by how talented his opponent was at using dual swords. There were as many difference between dual swordsmen as those who only use one sword. Kairen

fell into the most troublesome group of dual swordsmen. He could use both arms freely as if one was fighting against two opponents.

Kairen spoke.

“I heard you had 5 teachers.”

“It seems the princess tattled on me. I'm disappointed.”

“Didn't you also hear all kinds of slander about me? We are even now.”

“Well, I don't want to be called a petty man. So I'll agree that we are even.”

“Uh-huh. You heard secret stories from the Dragon Demon Princess. Most of the people of this country would love learning about those stories yet you are acting so hard to get. You should ask this question to any citizen of this country. How much worth does your story have compared to Arrieta's story?”

‘They'll probably consider mine to be more valuable?’

In a flash, the thought crossed Azell's mind. Such as he was, he was the legendary hero, who took down the Dragon Demon King. If he revealed his identity, everyone would drool at the prospect of hearing his story. He could probably gather a legion of people.

‘However, I would probably believe the story of a beautiful girl instead of a weather-worn man.... Mmmm. I would definitely be conflicted if I was asked the same question.’

As he was thinking seriously about it, Kairen spoke.

“Did one of your teachers use dual swords?”

“One of them did.”

“Ho-oh.”

“Except he was a different type from you.”

Azell's third teacher was a dual sword master. He was born in the desert, and he used two very curved blades. He used the two swords to move as one. He wasn't as dynamic as Kairen, but his teacher's style was very effective against multiple enemies.

Kairen asked a question.

“Then are you able to use dual swords?”

“I can. However, it isn't my main weapon. I'm the opposite of the Duke.”

“Too bad.”



“Well, if you want to, I can face you using dual swords. This is only a training session.”

“No. It isn't like that... I'm just lamenting the fact that I won't be able to fight with you using my full capability”

“I'm not interested in destroying this fine lodging facility. I don't want to pay an exorbitant amount for the damage it will cause.”

Currently, the two of them were sparring using only sword techniques. However, their true skills would only emerge if Azell used his Spirit Order techniques and Kairen used his Dragon qi. The moment those factors were applied to the battle, their sword techniques would morph into something entirely different.

However, this would cause a complete destruction of the lodging facility. No matter how skilled they were they were fighting with superhuman powers. It was inevitable they would cause damage to the surrounding.

Kairen smirked.

“Well, I want to see your techniques right now. Why not try using your dual sword style? I don't have a lot of chance to go up against a fellow dual swords wielder.”

“If I want to grant your request... I'll have to borrow a sword.”

It wasn't easy to ask another swordsman to borrow his sword. This was why Azell hesitated.

At that moment, Boar spoke.

“You can use my sword.”

“Mmmm? Are you sure?”

“I'll just treat it as an admission fee for seeing this sparring session. Moreover, my sword is more suitable for your use than Sir Giles' sword.”

“Thank you for letting me use it.”

Giles' sword required the use of both hands, so it was a bit on the heavier side. Boar used a shield, so the length and weight of his sword was ideal for one-handed use. Boar thought through all of this, and he decided his own sword was more suitable for performing the dual sword techniques.

‘It really wouldn't have mattered.’

The sword Azell was using right now was akin to Giles' sword. It would be a problem if it was a great sword that required the use of both hands, but he wasn't too picky about a sword of this size when he was using his dual sword techniques.

Kairen spoke in a pleased manner.

“The road to the capital city got a little bit more enjoyable.”

“Hmm. I can clearly see your intention. You just want to pester me.”

“It is the privilege of the old to be able to pester the young.”

“That is why the young hate dealing with the old.”

Azell kept grumbling as he sparred Kairen using his dual sword techniques. It was the same as before. The sparring was fierce and tight. They exchanged blows until they were tired, but they couldn't decide the victor.

## 8

“He's a monster.”

After a session of sparring with Azell, Kairen spoke to Arrieta. Arrieta queried.

“He is good enough to receive such an assessment from teacher?”

In Arrieta's view, Kairen was the strongest being. No one in the kingdom could hold a candle against Kairen. Kairen had spoken up

about someone having a high potential before, but he had never acknowledged someone having skills on par with him.

“Yes. This is the first time I've seen someone like that. I can't see the limit of his abilities.”

He had thought Arrieta mixed in some exaggeration in her storytelling about Azell. However, he never thought Arrieta was lying to him. He had thought Azell looked better than he was to Arrieta. Kairen had thought Azell possessed skills that made him look better than he really was when fighting his enemies.

However, he found out Azell was extraordinary when Kairen faced him.

‘His sword techniques.’

Surprisingly, Azell was better than Kairen at using multidisciplinary sword techniques. In terms of physical ability, Kairen held an overwhelming edge, so if it had been a true fight, he would have eventually won. However, they were fighting only in terms of techniques, and he wasn't able gain an upper hand over Azell even though he was using his dual sword techniques.

‘Spirit Order.’

This was also a part of Azell he hadn't seen yet. However, he caught glimpses of it during his travels, and he had heard the stories from Arrieta. He concluded Azell was at a higher level than

any Spirit Order practitioner Kairen knew.

‘Still, how could his reservoir of magical energy be so poor?’

This was the part where he had a hard time accepting. This was the part, which had puzzled Kairen and also Niberis.

Kairen had heard how Azell was first found, and what condition he was in. However, magical energy didn't become depleted when one's body weakens. It might happen for a brief moment, but the Rings of Life always replenished the Energy Pulse.

Moreover, after a Spirit Order practitioner reaches a certain level, their magical energy increased in an upward curve. He had never heard of someone like Azell, who was extremely unbalanced.

‘He said black magicians performed experiments on him... Hmmm. I'll have to ask others for their opinions later on.’

Kairen was knowledgeable about Spirit Order and magic, but he wasn't an expert in those fields. Kairen put away these questions for now, and he thought about who he should ask these questions.

‘He'll become really scary once his body is built up, and he attains enough magical energy. He is a little bit of an upstart, but it is comforting to know that he isn't evil.’

Azell had been accepted by the Guardian Shadows. Moreover, he had observed Azell up until now, and he wasn't a bad egg. Azell

didn't hesitated to say annoying words to him in front of his face. He actually like Azell's insolent attitude.

Arrieta mumbled to herself.

“I don't know what happened to him, but how could a being of his caliber show up all of a sudden?”

“I don't know. That's the part that raises so much questions. Even if we take his words to be true, he would have been captured by the black magician for several years at most. Even then he should have made a name for himself by then... We might not know who he is if he is from a different country.”

Kairen had already sent messages to various territories, so his underlings could look into Azell's background. They didn't have much information to start with, but it was enough to be able to start an investigation.

Azell Zestringer, red hair as if it's on fire, high rank Spirit Order practitioner, likely to be of the royal blood....

If his name was made up, then their search was all for naught. Still, there should be some information that could be salvaged. How could such a person be entirely unknown...

If Azell knew Kairen's thought, he would have laughed. It was a wild goose chase. At this point in time, no one had an inkling of Azell's true identity.

Arrieta asked a question.

“Isn't there a high chance that he is someone from a different country?”

“Probably.”

There were times when magic was used to deliver news, but the speed, in which information was spread, was still slow. It was possible not to know about a person if he gained his fame in a remote location of a different country. Even if a person was famous in a foreign country, it was still difficult to hear about them.

Kairen spoke.

“I want to meet those, whom he calls teacher.”

According to Arrieta's story, two of his teachers were already dead. However, this didn't guarantee the other three was also dead. If they were still alive, he really wanted to hear how they brought up such a being.

# Chapter 53 - Guardian Shadows (6)

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## 9

“What is a sword....”

Azell leaned against the window frame. He mumbled to himself as he looked up into the night sky.

He had heard this question numerous times long ago. It was 220 years after the Dragon Demon war had concluded, yet he repeated the question and answer he had discussed previously with his teachers.

There were 5 people who Azell had considered to be his teachers. They each had their own answer to this question.

‘The sword is a really nice lethal weapon. It allows a small and skinny kid like you to be able to kill an adult. It is a very wicked invention.’

‘Is it fine to let a child like me hold such a thing?’

‘Isn't it obvious? I'm letting you grasp the sword because you desire to carry out these lethal intentions.’

‘.....’



His views influenced Azell the most. It was why he thought of weapons strictly as tools. Maybe it was, because he was Azell's first teacher. Azell had guessed the man was a noble, and he didn't treat the sword like how a typical mercenary would. His view was unrestricted.

His second teacher spoke.

‘It is beyond the capability of most people to control their own body perfectly. We are a very poor performing living organism. What a great achievement it would be if one could perfectly control something that isn't one's body. What a feat it would be to be able to perfectly control a tool called a sword.’

He considered a sword, or more precisely weapons, as a means to reach the state of absolute sense. After he lost an arm and an eye, he realized the inborn gift of humans were deficient and he therefore searched for the absolute sense. Amongst all his teacher, his second teacher would be the only one called a true seeker of truth.

His third teacher spoke.

‘The path of the sword is the only destination for a lost soul like me. Don't become like me, Azell.’

He was an heir to a fallen kingdom. He had lost everything to the Dragon Demon King's army. He took revenge on the people directly involved, but he was always felt a sense of futility. In an

age of darkness, he was a hero who gave hope to the people like a ray of light. However, he had always been in pain, and he was tormented after he lost everything.

To him, the sword and the sword techniques were a connection to his destroyed past and memories. His extraordinary sword skills made Dragon Demon King's soldiers shake in fear. However, he didn't pursue the sword for its strength or the truth. It was a keepsake of his deceased loved ones. It connected him to the past as his memory gradually became fuzzy during the time of madness.

His fourth teacher wasn't a swordsman. No, he didn't use a weapon in the first place. He hadn't even learned any martial arts before he met Azell. He was like wild beast. However, he had an interesting opinion about swords and weapons.

‘It is an item that represents how large a murderous intent the humans have.’

‘What?’

‘Humans are weak. However, humans have an unbelievably large desire to kill those who scare them. Isn't this the reason why these items were made?’

‘...I guess it could be interpreted that way?’

‘The weak could kill the strong. It is something that happens quite often even in nature. However, it doesn't happen as often as

it does amongst the humans. Weapons and even martial arts were the ultimate result of humans trying to overcome their disadvantage.'

To his knowledge, his 5th teacher was a swordsman who possessed the most outstanding techniques. He was a crafty man who respected the sword more than anyone.

'The sword is my life and soul.'

'That is so old-fashion, old man.'

'Are you trying to say that new is more right than the old? Young men like you are too frivolous. I've devoted my whole life to the sword. It would be funny if my sword didn't hold that much weight.'

'.....'

'From the time when I was a child with no hair to the time my hair had turned white from old age, I focused my everything into the sword. Of course, it is my life and soul.'

...They were men who grasped the sword. They bet their lives of the present on the sword. They bet their ideal of tomorrow on the sword. Each of them had their own answers. Azell thought of those times, quietly putting on a smile.

They were being chased.

Niberis wasn't used to situations like this. It was strange that a Dragon Demon King worshipper had never been chased before, but truthfully, she had only moved within the confines of a well-made plan. Her underlings had worked hard to gather information, and they had set the stage for her. She had leisurely worked under these conditions.

She was basically a flower grown indoors. She had extraordinary potential, and she had used it to reach an astonishing level in magic. She couldn't understand why her organization was so afraid of the world. They possessed such powerful strength yet why did they have to hide while being afraid of the world?

Of course, the prophecy said they couldn't show themselves until the the Dragon Demon King returned. If they carelessly made a mistake when facing the humans, they would be swarmed by their troops. Their organization might be destroyed.

Still, was there a reason why they couldn't rule from the background? Even if there were people opposing them, couldn't they squash the antagonists with their power? Would it be so hard to fill the upper society with the Dragon Demon King worshipers?

Niberis always had a sense of dissatisfaction in her heart, and now she realized she had been wrong.

“Kook.....!”

“Miss. Don't worry about blocking each blow. Put more effort into running away!”

Duran, who was running beside her, gave the advice.

There were beings possessing powerful magic following them from the back, and these beings were firing magic blindly. Moreover, there were more than one.

‘If it was one-on-one, I could.....!’

Kwah-kwhang! Kwahng! Kwahhhhhng!

Consecutive magical attacks exploded in the surrounding, and the sound of the explosions rang out.

Niberis had summoned her demonic beast of darkness, travelling along at a high speed as if she was sliding across the surface. Just a moment ago, she had tried her flying magic to surge forward, but she had been humiliated by being shot down.

It was the Dragon Demon Magician Count Michael. He was known as the patron saint of the Eastern Rulain Kingdom. Moreover, three of his students and five knights were chasing after Niberis and Duran.

Duran, Niberis and her other companion was moving at twice the speed of a galloping horse. Normally, they would have lost Michael's party long time ago. Moreover, if they were the only ones tracking them, they wouldn't have had to put as much effort in escaping as they were doing now.

The problem was that the beings moved at a frightening speed. These beings were circling their surrounding.

Shweeeeeee.....!

These beings had a white robe over their entire body. They were like ghosts. It was the Guardian Shadows.

The problem was, they weren't ghosts. They possessed true bodies. They moved incredibly fast, and they kept disappearing while they attacked, as if they were skipping dimensions.

Cheng! Too-hahk!

Duran received an attack from a Guardian Shadow. The Guardian Shadows had taken a transparent phantom-like blades out from within his robes. Every time its sword clashed with Duran's sword, a light burst forth.

That wasn't the only problem.

Puh-puhng! Puh-buh-buh-buh-buhng!

Each Guardian Shadows fought in a different combat style. Some bastard shot energy arrows, and another one attacked using magic.

They all had frightening mobility, and they had a variety of ways of attacking. Moreover, they were all powerful. Even Niberis couldn't become lax in her defense. They all seemed to have a screw loose, but at the very least, there were 20 of them in pursuit. Moreover, they worked surprisingly well together. Unlike humans, the Guardian Shadows ran forward without worrying about their lives, so they were very hard to deal with.

“The Guardian Shadows are really... They are really annoying!”

Michael was leading magicians and Guardian Shadows. If one of the two group was missing, Niberis thought that she could take care of them without much difficulty. However, the two groups working in concert was very troublesome. Her group was at a numerical disadvantage, and the Guardian Shadow's special nature was terrifying to a magician.

“Kook!”

Niberis let out an attack towards a Guardian Shadow who was approaching from the side like a ghost. She had put a large barrier over her entire party, yet this bastard used some unknown method to enter within. It looked like wizardry whenever it skipped across space.

It was at that moment that a Guardian Shadow appeared behind Regina, who had been running beside Niberis.

“Look out!”

Niberis reacted almost reflexively. The Guardian Shadow attacked the shocked Regina with a beam of light magic.

Pah-haht!

“Ahhk.....!”

She lay herself open to attack, and Niberis took a magical arrow to her arm. Duran raged when he saw this.

“Miss! How dare you!”

Sparks flew from the eyes hidden by the helmet.

They had to run away a long distance, so Duran had been saving his strength. He had been focusing his power on defense and running away. However, at that moment, his magic swirled like raging waves and a shockwave poured out into the surrounding.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

The Guardian Shadows in the surrounding was swept away in a



single stroke.

“I'm... I'm fine.”

Niberis spoke as she calmed her breathing. She wasn't used to feeling pain. She had always been able to overpower her opponents, so she had rarely felt a threat to her body. The only time she experienced being shaken up was when she had trained her mind.

This was why she had almost lost it when she was hit by the arrow. Still, she endured by gritting her teeth. Even if she had led a sheltered life, her pride wouldn't forgive herself if she let her mind become disordered from a mere arrow wound.

Regina, who had been struck dumb, spoke.

“T...thank you.”

“...Don't divert your attention. The moment you let your guard down, you are dead.”

Niberis spoke coldly as she glared at Regina. She had given her enemies an opening when she tried to save her underling. The fact that she had been injured was humiliating.

‘If it wasn't for that man, this would have never occurred. The man with the name seeped in sin. I'll be sure to repay this humiliation.’

Niberis' anger towards Azell allowed her to overcome her pain as she continued running away.

## 11

A boy sleeping under the shade of a tree opened his eyes. The teen had sleepy eyes underneath the hat that was pressed down on his head. His age looked to be around 15 or 16?

“Ah-mmm. What is it?”

The boy looked around his surrounding.

Hoo-ooh-ooh.....

The Guardian Shadows slowly moved around as their white robes billowed behind them. The boy was also someone, who had been chosen by the Guardian Shadows.

“What's going on?”

The boy asked a question, but the Guardian Shadow didn't give him an answer. After staring at the boy, it disappeared.

“Hmmm. Was it sent to protect me?”

The boy tilted his head in puzzlement. He wasn't upset at the non-answer. He was well-aware that the Guardian Shadows were terrible partners to have a conversation with.

“All right. I'll go.”

The boy let out a yawn. He stood up, then started to walk.

After he had been chosen by these beings, he repeatedly experienced things he couldn't explain. The current situation was a perfect example. No one told him exactly where he should go or when he should be there. He just felt a tug towards a direction, and he had a feeling that he had to travel that way.

「Prophecy.....」

He suddenly heard the voice of a Guardian Shadow from his surrounding. The surprised boy turned to look at the Guardian Shadow.

“What?”

「The prophesied being.....」

“Are you saying the man of the prophecy has shown up?”

An answer wasn't forthcoming this time around. The Guardian Shadow had said some ambiguous words, then it shut its mouth.

However, it had been enough for the boy.

“Ha. He really came during my lifetime, at a time when the meaning of my life is almost at an end?”

The boy was in blank amazement as he mumbled to himself. Then he walked towards the direction his senses were directing him to.

# Chapter 54 - Dragon Demon Prince (1)

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## 1

Rulain Kingdom's Capital Ruledia.

In the twilight of the Nadick Empire, this kingdom became an independent country. When Duke Rulain became the founder king, he made the Rulain castle that he was residing at the time the royal palace. Afterwards, he expanded the capital city, so it would befit the dignity of a king. The city had become much more lively and beautiful as time passed.

A squad of troops exited the royal palace. There were 20 knights and 3 magicians. Moreover, the group also had 2 healers. The composition of the party made it unlikely that they were going out for a patrol.

They left the capital and out in the open for the night. Then, they headed towards their destination.

The middle-aged veteran knight who was leading the party spoke.

“We'll be able to join up with the princess' party in the afternoon without any complications.”

“I believe so.”

"Personally, I have great expectation about this meeting. I don't know why the Dragon Sword Duke has come here, but..."

"It's the same for me."

It wasn't only the knight who had answered. Every one of them shared the sense of anticipation. They weren't talking about it, but their eyes sparkled when 'Dragon Sword Duke' was mentioned.

These men were sent out by the throne to go greet the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta. When they received news that an unsavory group had tried to kidnap her, they sent out enough manpower to be able to protect her.

Arrieta wasn't expecting such a welcoming party.

As she was about to arrive at the capital safely, she decided to send a brief explanation on what had happened in recent days. However, from the throne's perspective, they couldn't help but be appalled by the news.

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goong.....!

"Mmmm?"

The horses ran at a languid pace as the knights conversed with each other. However, their expressions hardened as they heard the

sound of an explosion from afar.

Koo-ooh-ooh-oohng.....!

It wasn't just one explosion. Consecutive explosions rang out. The veteran knight asked the question.

“What do you think is going on? Is there a unit that's training nearby?”

No matter where one went, troops trained with magic. This was why one could occasionally hear sounds of explosions in passing.

The mage replied.

“Please wait here for a moment.”

He used a Far Seeing Magic. The origin of the explosions was too far away, so it was impossible to get a detailed account on what was happening. However, one could get the gist of the situation.

Soon the magician's complexion changed.

“I don't think the army is training right now. The sound is coming from the road.”

“Oh no! Is it perhaps the princess' party?”

Arrieta's party, whom they were travelling to meet, might be under attack by the enemies again. The veteran knight let out a shout.

“Everyone run at full speed!”

“Yes, sir!”

They galloped at full speed towards where the sound of the explosion had originated. As they were getting closer, the sound of the explosions continued.

Kwah-kwang.....! Kwahng.....! Kwahhhhng.....!

One could tell from the sound that a fierce battle was occurring. As they approached the location, the magical shock wave from the explosions made their senses tingle.

‘Who is fighting whom?’

The veteran knight became very anxious. He was a Quadruple Master, but the power of the explosions were something that he couldn't handle with his power.

However, when they frantically arrived on the scene, they couldn't help but be confused.



“Princess?”

Two people were standing a small distance away from the explosions. One of them was a beautiful girl with white blonde hair and yellow eyes. It was the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta. Her young maid was by her side, and they were looking at the battle in a relaxed manner.

“Mmm? Aren’t you Sir Veran?”

Arrieta recognized the veteran knight and was puzzled. The veteran knight Veran quickly got off his horse. He was too taken aback, so he forgot about the manners he had to keep towards a royal. He asked her a question.

"I'm sorry, but what's going on here?"

“That's the question I want to ask you. Why are you guys here?”

“We are here to escort princess' party to the capital.”

“Ah. Was it because of the message I sent ahead? It seems I caused you trouble for nothing.”

Arrieta couldn't help, but laugh. She had sent her news without putting much thought into it. Of course, this would be the move made by the throne in response.

Veran carefully asked the question.

“Princess. What's.....”

Kwah-kwahng!

At that moment, the sound of an explosion was heard again. The surprised Veran looked towards where the sound of the explosions had originated.

He heard Arrieta's answer from the side.

“It's my party members. Sir Azell and Duke Tarantos is in the midst of a sparring session. You aren't in any danger if you don't get too close. You don't have to worry about it.”

“They are in the midst of a sparring match?”

Veran asked the question, to which Arrieta nodded her head.

“That's right.”

“.....”

Veran lost the words he was about to say. This was happening within the view of Arrieta. Moreover, the action happening in front of them exceeded anything he could have imagined.

‘That? That's a sparring session?’

This was too intense and grandiose to be called a sparring match.

“You are as slippery as always!”

Kairen yelled with an annoyed voice. At the same time, his dual swords danced fiercely. In a blink of an eye, he had swung his swords over 10 times in mid-air.

Shwee-shwee-shwee-shwee-shweeek!

The empty air was shredded, but the person who should be letting out a cry wasn't there. He was sure he had attacked the real body, but the smirking illusion had disappeared. Then, a dangerous presence appeared from his side.

Zzuhng!

Sword clashed against sword, and a clear sound rang out. However, this lasted only for a moment. The resistance he felt at the tip of his hands disappeared as if it was a lie. Kairen couldn't help it as his stance faltered. In a flash, a red-colored hair young man named Azell appeared behind him.

Kairen let out a cry of indignation. He stabbed without even looking backwards.

“How many time are you going to use the same method!”

“Until it doesn't work on you.”

“Ook?”

Kairen was taken aback. He was sure he had caught the real body, so he had thrust backwards in an acrobatic move. So why was Azell's voice coming from the front?

Then, a sword was placed on Kairen's throat. Azell spoke with a triumphant air.

“Hoot. I've won today.”

“Shit.”

Kairen's expression crumpled.

“I destroyed your three-layered clones. Did you create a 4 layered body clone? Are you some kind of a child? You keep adding another layer every time I break one? ”

“Uh-huh. You shouldn't complain after losing in that fashion. Moreover, it wasn't a 4 layered body clone. You are very far from the right answer.”

“What? Then what the hell did you do?”

“Of course, it is a secret. You should think about it and come up with your own answer. Maybe if you win next time, I'll tell you. With this match, I'm up 3 victories on you. I'm going to collect a fat reward when I get to the capital city.”

Azell whistled as he sheathed his sword.

After the first sparring match of the sword, Kairen and Azell sparred everyday on the road to the capital. They had even started using the Dragon Demon qi and Spirit Order.

Of course, this was a sparring session, so they set various parameters beforehand. Still, the aftermath was quite scary. This was why they only sparred with simple swordsmanship near a town. They also agreed not to use techniques that would cause too much damage to the surrounding.

Currently, Azell's record was 7 win, 4 loss, and 2 tie. He was ahead by 3 wins. Kairen sheathed his dual swords while grumbling.

“My reputation as the Dragon Sword Duke has taken a huge hit. Of course, no one would believe it even if you told them you won.”

“I guess so.”

Azell smiled as he thought inside.

‘My friends would have never believed it if I told them I had lost 4 times.’

Even if Azell was in his weakened condition, this was a great accomplishment for Kairen. Moreover, Azell couldn't get smug about being ahead of him. In terms of pure swordsmanship, he held the edge. However, once they started using their true powers, it was hard for Azell to overcome the difference in strength. He achieved victory today by using all the various tricks he had hidden up until now.

‘If this was a real battle... Mmm. I would give the current me the odds of 3 to 7 in his favor.’

Azell made a cold assessment regarding the difference in battle capability between him and Kairen. This showed how highly he regarded Kairen.

Azell became overly chatty.

“Well, I don't care if they don't believe it. It isn't as if I'm doing this so the Duke loses face.”

“You little shitheel.”

The two of them sparred after they agreed to a bet. They mutually agreed that one would grant a request if the other won.

The request had to be within reason. Veran and the knights were all appalled, their mouth open as if their jaws would be dislocated.

“Hmmm. Did you come from the throne? I'm Duke Tarantos. Kairen Taratos.”

“I...it is an honor to be able to meet you, Dragon Sword Duke.”

Veran was barely able to collect his thoughts, then he gave his greetings.

## 2

After joining up with the escort sent by the throne, it took the party 4 days to arrive at the capital Ruledia.

The capital couldn't be compared to the other cities. It was much larger in size and quite grand. Azell was a bit impressed.

‘The size wasn’t comparable, but the exterior appearance of the city was about as good or better than the old cities.’

Before Azell went to sleep, the Nadick Empire had almost unified the continent under the great empire. Moreover, they had been quite meticulous in making the capital to have a dignified appearance. It had been quite a striking city.

Moreover, he realized this city was much larger than the cities he had seen before. He couldn't help but enjoy himself as he looked at the lively city. The thing he liked the most was all the people were overflowing with energy.

‘I bet the Nadick Empire would have become like this after I went to sleep.’

After the Dragon Demon war ended, a deep scar had been left behind. Azell remembered the people. They had gained a hope for the future, but the majority of the people had struggled to live on.

The party received glances from the residents of the capital city. Moreover, people shouted from joy at the sight of Arrieta.

“Arrieta! Arrieta!”

“The Kingdom's Valiant Flower!”

Embarrassing praises were thrown at her from the surrounding. It didn't matter if the person was male or female, old or young. He found out that she was a universally loved existence.

Azell slyly asked her a question.

“...so this is the reason why you dressed up?”

“If I walked around the capital with a shabby appearance, it



would basically stain the throne's reputation. It is annoying, but I have to endure it.”

Truthfully, they could have arrived at the capital yesterday night. However, Arrieta insisted on staying at a town a bit off from the capital. She had delayed her schedule, and when she came down from her room in the morning, she had dolled herself up. She said she had the duty to show the people that greeted her a beautiful appearance.

Azell asked her a question.

“Jeez. What would you have done if you didn't have Ms. Enora?”

“Mmmm. Well.....”

When she set off to visit the Western border guards, Arrieta had insisted on leaving behind Enora. However, she had lost to Enora's tenaciousness. As they travelled, Enora had found out Arrieta was terrible at dressing herself.

Arrieta let out a bitter laugh.

“I wouldn't have been put in a tough spot, but I'm sure it would have all worked out.”

“...I don't think it would have worked out.....”

“If it hadn’t work out in the end, I could have borrowed a maid from a noble nearby. I’m not as hopeless as you think.”

Arrieta started justifying herself.

Azell looked at Enora. She didn't say anything, but she had put strength into her shoulders as she preened.

“I guess being a maid to the royal family is quite the achievement, Ms Enora.”

“Of course. It isn't something anyone can become. Do you see me a little bit differently now?”

“I've always thought Ms. Enora was amazing. Haven't you realized that yet?”

“Oh my. You are almost comparable to a veteran knight at speaking flattery.”

Even if she spoke that way, he could tell Enora liked his flattery.

Arrieta returned with a dignified appearance, and it notified the people of the capital that she had returned safely. When the people heard that she was returning, they had vacated a part of their schedule and were ready to greet her.

As they were on their way to receive an audience from the

monarch, Azell asked Giles a question.

“What's wrong, Sir Giles?”

“Ooh. Mmmm?”

“You are acting uptight like a new recruit given his first assignment.”

“...Am I really acting that way?”

As a soldier, it was a metaphor that truly appealed to him. Azell spoke.

“Yes, you are. Why?”

“Ah. That's... I can't help but become nervous when I think about the fact that I'll have to meet his majesty.”

“That's a normal response. If anything, Sir Azell is the weird one. How come you are so unaffected?”

Boar asked the question. He was part of the Royal Knights, so he had experienced meeting with the monarch. However, when Boar met the monarch for the first time, he had been more rigid than the current Giles. In contrast, Azell was completely relaxed.

Azell spoke.

“Mmm. I don't know. It is a great honor to have an audience with a monarch, but we aren't the leading characters. We just have to stay next to the princess. After standing still, we'll just withdraw.”

“I guess so... Still, I can't help it.”

“Well, Sir Azell acted this way even when you met the princess and the duke. I'm not sure whether you are daring or fearless.”

Giles let out a bitter laugh.

# Chapter 55 - Dragon Demon Prince (2)

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Soon the party was granted an audience with the king alongside Arrieta and Kairen. As Azell had said before, they didn't have to do anything. It was a formal occasion to announce Arrieta and Kairen's return to the capital. Arietta and Kairen gave a report on the important events that had happened up until now. Everyone else just held their head down and knelt. After awhile, they exited. That was all they did for the entire audience.

Giles made an expression as if he had just survived a life and death situation.

“Whew. It's finally ended.”

“It wasn't that big of a deal. What will you do if you get promoted later on?”

“Mmmm. A promotion.....”

“I'll have to excuse myself for now.”

Boar spoke. He was a member of the Royal Knights, so he had to go report on what had happened on the return trip.

Boar spoke to the two men.

“I'll contact you guys when I get off work. If you don't mind, why

don't you come to my house tonight?”

The Marquis Zilred's domain was far from here, but as a noble, he naturally had an estate in the capital. Moreover, Marquis Zilred was from a prestigious family, so the extravagant estate was located near the center of the capital.

Azell spoke.

“Ah. I'm thankful for the invite, but I don't think it'll be possible today.”

“Why?”

“I don't think the Princess and the Duke will let go of me.”

“Ah, that's true. Sir Azell is quite popular with those two.”

“I don't particularly want to be popular with them.”

“Why don't you tell yourself that lie, while watching yourself in a mirror? Please be sure to contact me when you escape from their grasp. I'll most definitely give you an invite.”

“I'll do so.”

“Sir Giles... Mmmmm. What about you? Do you have any older

relatives you have to give greetings to?”

“No. I don't have to do that. I'll gladly accept the invitation.”

Viscount Vince's family wasn't really well-known, and not many of their blood-relations worked for the throne. This was why Giles had planned on looking for a suitable inn he could lodge in for his stay at the capital.

“All right, Sir Azell. You have to contact me later.”

“Ah, all right. You are inviting another guy, so why are you being so persistent...”

“I get the impression you are the kind of man, who will suddenly disappear if I turn my back on you. That is why I'm trying to nail you down...”

“Do I look that cold-hearted?”

At Azell's question, Giles and Boar looked at each other, and they nodded their head as if Azell had said something very obvious. Azell was slightly wounded.

“Jeez. All right. I'll most definitely contact you, so don't worry about it.”

“I'll try putting some faith in you.”

Boar grinned then he left his seat. Azell also grinned as he looked at Boar's retreating back.

Giles asked in puzzlement.

“What?”

“Nothing. I was just thinking Sir Boar has changed a lot. When I think about how he was at the start of the trip, his actions right now is almost unimaginable.”

“I guess that's true.”

Giles snickered. He would have never thought a person could change so dramatically.

At that moment, Enora was walking towards them from the opposite corridor.

“Sir Azell and Sir Giles. Do the two of you have a place to stay in the capital?”

“Of course, I don't.”

“I don't have any firm plans right now.”



“I see. The princess has arranged for a place where the two of you could stay....”

“Thank you.”

Giles showed some signs of relief. Truthfully, he didn't have much disposable income, so he had been worried about the cost of lodging in the capital. It would have taken a large share of his money.

The two of them headed towards Arrieta's royal villa. In accordance to Arrieta, a guest room had been prepared for Azell.

It was basically a detached palace inside the royal palace. It was a guest 'room', but it was a far cry from what a normal person thought of as a 'room'. It was as spacious as a large house, and the interior was as luxurious as royal palace.

However, Azell wasn't surprised when he saw the room.

“As expected of a palace, it is quite gaudy.”

That was all the words of admiration he spoke.

Giles was flabbergasted.

“I really am curious on what kind of life you lead in the past. Everything here is so dazzling...”

“I'm also curious. Well, didn't princess and Ms Enora say I was of noble birth? Maybe that's why.”

“You've regained some more memories?”

“One or two... I would be doing a task when my memories would overlap with the present. My identity always eludes me, but various experiences from my past appears in my mind. I do believe I was part of a well-off noble family.”

They had been travelling in the same party, and it was getting harder and harder to believe Azell's words regarding his memory loss. He was unbelievably strong, and he was hiding too many secrets. There were a lot of holes to his story, but they couldn't outright call him a liar. They were in an uncertain situation where they couldn't press him for answers.

‘Above all else, he is too self assured.’

If Azell was trying to fool them, he would be more careful. He didn't display such an attitude. He acted as if he didn't care if others believed him or not. This made people trust his story.

Moreover, Giles and numerous witnesses were present when they first found him. Azell had been in such a rough state that it wouldn't be surprising if he had some lasting traumas.

Azell spoke.

“However, I'm pretty sure I'm not of this country.”

“Why do you say so?”

“There were too many unfamiliar sights as we were coming here. The appearance of the streets, the customs and manners... If I could recall all of those, I would probably be a noble of this country. Still, I have no idea why I was in the forest.”

“Hmmm.....”

“It's quite fortunate you speak the same language as us.”

Truthfully, that was the point he was most impressed about after waking up in this time period.

If he compared the the current spoken and written language to the ones before he went to sleep, they were almost identical.

He could somewhat believe it for the written words, but the common speech hadn't changed either in 200 years. How incredible was that?

At the time, the Nadick empire used the language of Babel. Rulain kingdom and the other 7 countries that broke off from the Nadick empire was still using that language. There was minor changes in vocabulary and speech, but the framework of the

language was still the same. It felt as if he was hearing a dialect of the language.

“I'll thank the legend of the Babel. It is unknown whether the legend is true, and I would have never thought there would come a day when I would give thanks to it.”

Even during the days of the Nadick Empire, the story of Babel wasn't written down in the history books. It was a story passed down through the ages.

There used to be a lot of languages in existence in the past. Even though the Nadick empire had been very close to uniting the whole continent, the lands outside their territory had their own language and culture.

However, in the far distant past, the world had countless more languages in comparison. Even by crossing a single mountain, the spoken language would change. The language divide lead to many conflicts and death.

The great immemorial mages of the past found this situation to be regrettable. They all gathered in one place to cast a massive magical ceremony, and it was named the 'Babel'. They erected a large tower that rose high into the sky, and they gathered all the languages from the consciousness of people. After gathering as many as they could, they created a common language that would express the intent of all the people. This was the language of Babel.

When the language was born through this highest order of

magic, every single person on the continent knew the language. Then it had been passed down the the ages, and the framework of the language had never changed. Some of the lexicons changed, but it allowed people to speak to others without a hitch.

Azell spoke.

“I guess I'll rest a little bit until the princess calls me. Since we can't probably wander around this place, would you like to have a chess match?”

“Mmmm. I'm a pretty poor player.”

“You should build up your skills up to a certain point. It is an indication of refinement for a noble.”

“Those words really don't suit you.”

Giles couldn't help, but smirk.

### 3

In the end, Arrieta hadn't called for Azell on the day they arrived at the capital. After her return, he had a lot of reports to make, and she had been dragged around to make appearances at various locations. Before she knew it, the day had come to an end.

After receiving Arrieta's message of apology, Giles followed Boar to his house when he got off work. Azell was the only one left.

Arrieta had assigned servants and maids to him. After eating the dinner they brought, Azell was vacantly staring up at the ceiling.

“I should have asked for permission to enter the library.”

The royal palace's library probably had a lot of books. While he was staying here, he wanted to read up on all the history books to his heart's content.

Azell was lying atop a bed that was big enough to jump around in. He had thrown his body atop it, and he was looking at the ceiling of the bed. It really fit in with the image of a bed that should be inside the royal apartments. Each corner of the bed had a post, and a fabric with fancy patterns was placed above to make a canopy.

“Relaxing like this isn't too bad...”

Now that he thought about it, it had been a while since he had the opportunity to do nothing.

It had been only a month since he had awoken from the ruins of the Balan Forest, but that month had been really hectic. He had experienced several battles, and he had been always been on edge inside as he tried to hone himself once again.

‘It's true even if I included the time before my sleep.’

After the Dragon Demon war had ended, he hadn't had a true rest afterwards. He was too busy taking care of the postwar events, and the Dragon Demon King's curse had been eating away at his life.

This was why he didn't mind spending his time doing nothing right now.

He was planning on spending the rest of the day staring blankly at nothing when it happened.

Ddok ddok.

He heard a knock on his door. Azell bade the maid to come in. After she entered, she spoke to him.

“Sir Azell. Someone important is here looking for you.”

“Someone important?”

Azell was puzzled. Arrieta had already said she won't be able to see him tonight. Was it a message from Kairen? However, the maid should already know Azell had traveled in the same party as Kairen, so it was strange for her to use the term someone important....

Azell pointed at his head as he spoke.

“Mmmm. May I ask for some help in tidying myself?”

“Yes.”

The maid understood what he was asking for. She approached him, and she brushed his tangled hair. Then she helped him straighten his clothes.

Azell knew how the world of the nobles worked, and he knew he was an outsider. Normally, even if the maid had offered to help him, he would have feigned ignorance of not knowing what she was offering, and it would have probably lead to irritating his maid. However, Azell had become the guest of the throne, so he had to think about Arrieta's reputation. He knew he needed to act with more prudence.

‘This is why they keep saying I act like a noble.’

As he was installed into the role of Duke Karzark, he was taught about manners until he became dry and worn away. It had been seeped into his bones. Azell stepped out of his bedroom with a bitter smile on his face.

Then his eyes widened when he saw the young man drinking tea in front of the table.

‘Uh?’

This was the first time Azell had seen this young man, but he



knew who this was at a glance.

The young man had wavy yet tidy white hair. He possessed golden eyes and his ears were slightly pointed. There was a sharp and bluish-white feather-like horn above his left ear...

‘Dragon Demon Prince Seigar Weil Rulain.’

The young man looked very alike to Arrieta. He was two years younger than Arrieta, yet he looked at Azell with a cold elegance flowing across his face.

“I'm sorry for showing up announced so late into the night. Are you Sir Azell, the man who was knighted by my sister?”

“Yes, prince.”

“I told the maid not to tell you my identity, but it seems you recognized who I was. Of course, it should have been expected, since you spent a good amount of time with my sister.”

The young man didn't show any signs of being surprised. The Dragon Demon Prince was used to others knowing his identity, and he was well aware his appearance was similar to Arrieta.

“I'll formally introduce myself. I am the first son of the Rulain Kingdom. I am called the Dragon Demon Prince Seigar Weil Rulain.”

“Knight Azell Zestringier gives his greetings.”

Azell gave his greetings in a courtly manner. When Seigar saw this, he looked over Azell conspicuously.

“I heard you were an unknown countryman until my sister gave you the title of knight, but it seems those rumors were wrong. If she had told me you were from a noble family, I would have believed it.”

“Thank you.”

“Please sit. You might think me strange for saying this, since I came here looking for you.”

The young man was only 15, but he carried himself like a royal. He didn't show any awkwardness when speaking informally to an older person, who was beneath him in station. Moreover, he didn't give the vibe that he was looking down on others. He acted the way he did, because it was befitting his station. It came naturally to him.

When Azell sat across him, Seigar spoke.

“I came here, because I wanted to see you.”

“Me?”

## Chapter 56 - Dragon Demon Prince (3)

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"Yes. This is the first time I've seen my sister and teacher speak so passionately about someone."

It seemed after returning to the palace, she had talked about Azell in the presence of her family.

Seigar spoke.

"Also, I wanted to thank you."

"Thank me for what?"

"I heard my sister wouldn't have been safe if it weren't for you. Thank you for protecting my sister, sir Azell."

He had a cold expression, but his words were sincere. Azell spoke.

"No. I just did what I had to do."

"There aren't a lot of people in this world, who would have done the same. My elder sister is strong. She is a woman, yet she has the burden of to fighting by herself to raise the throne's reputation. She's always pushing herself to the limit, yet we keep asking her for more.... I would like her to think a little bit about her own happiness."

Seigar spoke after he let out a sigh.

“Sir Azell. I've heard your skills are outstanding. Do you have any thoughts about being one of my knights? You won't be disappointed by the remuneration I will give you.”

“You have such a high opinion of me even though this is the first time you have seen me. I'm thankful. However, I have some unfinished businesses that will require me to travel. I won't be able to accept your offer. I apologize.”

“Hmm. I heard my sister knighted you. Are you perhaps thinking about working under my elder sister?”

“No.”

“Is what my elder sister said was true? You have no ambitions towards being promoted?”

“That is true at least for right now. There is something I have to do first...”

“I heard you've gone through some difficulties that are hard to explain. I won't ask you any further questions. However, it's too bad. I've only recently started my activities, so I need a lot of men with skills..”

“Even if it isn't me, doesn't the prince have a lot of talented prospects within your service?”

“The throne always lends me men, but it isn't enough. I need a lot of men, who will work directly under me. Unfortunately, there aren't many men like that. The veterans are already entrenched in their positions, and it would create some friction if I just take people I like. So in the end I have to look for men who have potential yet they mustn't hold any high positions. It isn't easy.”

“I see.”

He spoke about a topic that didn't suit a young man. However, he had grown up as a royal, so he knew the meaning of his work. Moreover, he could accurately pinpoint what issues were causing problem when dealing with people.

“My elder sister is experiencing similar troubles... Unfortunately, she also doesn't plan on increasing her immediate staff. We need to aggressively find people that could assist my elder sister, but she doesn't like others sacrificing themselves for her. This is why she jumps into danger, and she overworks herself. I want to lessen the burden of my elder sister. This is why I need talented people.”

Seigar wanted his activities to lessen the burden on Arrieta. This was why he had come here to poach Azell.....

‘He is assuredly a strange human, but.....’

As Arrieta and Kairen noticed, Seigar also felt a faint sense of Dragon Demon Magic. However, it was very subdued compared to the Dragon Demons or the Dragon Majins. It was an oddity. That

was all he thought it was.

‘It seems my elder sister and master exaggerated their story a little bit.’

If he ignored the scent of Dragon Demon magic from him, Azell's magical energy wasn't that great. This made it impossible for Seigar to think of Azell as a strong person, since this was their first meeting. Even if he was a strong person hiding his magical waves, he would be able to sense whether the person was hiding a powerful strength or not.

Seigar didn't trust other's evaluation of people. He was satisfied only after he checked the person himself.

There was already a lot of stories going around about Azell. Arrieta had mentioned him, and the royal knights, who went out to escort Arrieta, was making a fuss after they witnessed the sparring match between Azell and Kairen. However, now that he had met Azell, Seigar determined that the stories about Azell had been exaggerated.

‘Well, he is only a human. I put too high of an expectation on him.’

Seigar reaffirmed to himself the fact that he was strong. If he excluded his master Kairen, there weren't that many, who exceeded him.

This wasn't a simple childish assessment from a young man. It was an opinion supported with his experience in actual battle. He had his first live battle experience this year, and he had participated in two more battles after that. He had overwhelmed his foes.

After being trained by Kairen, he had faced off against a lot of humans. However, he had never come across one that he considered to be really strong. Even the royal knight, who was called the strongest swordsman, couldn't do much against Seigar. Without realizing it, Segiar formed the opinion that humans could be outstanding in terms of techniques, but they won't be able to touch him in terms of overall battle ability.

“Ah. I don't plan on thanking you with only words on saving my sister. Do you want anything? If you don't have anything particular in mind, I can give you riches as a reward.”

“Mmm. What if... Could you make it so that I'll be able to enter the palace's library?”

“The Royal Library?”

Seigar was puzzled. This was a request he had never expected.

Azell spoke.

“Yes. I want to see the books in there. I would be thankful if I was given full access.”

“That won't be too hard. I'll put in a word. Just in case, I'll ask them to give you an admission pass.”

“Thank you.”

“I'll excuse myself now. This conversation was enjoyable.”

“Please take care on your way back.”

After receiving his respects from Azell, Seigar joined the servants waiting for him outside to leave.

Azell mumbled to himself.

“It seems my stay in the palace will become annoying... Mmmm.”

## 4

His prediction was spot on.

Azell placed a hand on his head the next day when he received a mountainous pile of invitations and presents.

“Aigo. My god.”



The noble society was always like this. Their main source of amusement was their interest in people and their social life. This was especially true in capital. There were too many of their peers gathered in a single place. This meant cultural and fashion changes happened up-to-the-minute here.

If they saw someone eye-catching, the nobles wouldn't leave that person alone.

The Dragon Demon Princess had never knighted anyone before him. Moreover, she hadn't required him to take the oath of loyalty. This had surprised everyone.

Moreover, they had heard from his travel companions that he had shone brightly when facing the Dragon Demon King worshippers, who had targeted Arrieta. Even the Dragon Sword Duke, who was called the living legend, gave him compliments. On top of that, Sir Veran had gone to escort the princess, and he swore he saw Azell fighting on par with the Dragon Sword Duke in their sparring match.

The story started to spread. The nobles were very sensitive to rumors, and their eyes sparkled at the chance to see someone interesting. Of course, the nobles would show interest in Azell.

“Wow. I envy you.”

Enora had come to invite Azell to lunch, and her eyes were sparkling. Azell replied in an apathetic manner.

“What's so good about this?”

“You've become the star of the social circles overnight. Everyone is sending you invitations and presents. As a noble lady, it is a dream-like scenario.”

“...since I'm not a noble lady, this isn't welcomed.”

Well, it wasn't as if he hadn't experienced this before. Maybe, that was why he wasn't excited about it. Before he was put to sleep, every noble had shown interest, respect and affection towards him. Even the members of the royal family begged for some face time. They even begged for him to teach them martial arts.

“Moreover, the presents are a little bit... Do you want this perfume, Ms. Enora?”

Amongst the present he received, there were perfumes, scarves and silver jewelries. A lot of them were meant for female use. Enora's eyes sparkled.

“Are you sure?”

“Well, I don't need these items. Also, if you want anything else here, you can have it.”

It didn't even cross Azell's mind to return these presents.

From the perspective of a normal person, the presents sent along with the invitations were very expensive items. From the perspective of the nobles, it was something they sent out of formality to keep up appearances. If one returned the presents, because of the expensive price tag, it would be considered rude. The only time he would be able to turn down a gift was if the item was more expensive than all of these presents combined.

Also, this couldn't be seen as an unnecessary favor. Azell would need clothes befitting the noble society. From the perspective of nobles, they didn't want the person they invite to embarrass themselves by dressing informally. This was why they even sent items for female use.

Enora was smiling with joy.

“Wow. You seem to be a really good person, Sir Azell!!”

“...by looking at the timing of your words, you make it seem like I was a really bad person in the past.”

“Are you sure about this? If you plan on accepting the invitations, you will need these stuff. If you don't have a female companion to go to these events, I can introduce you to some of my Unnis that I know...”

All the palace maids were of noble birth. This was why they were all eager for a chance to make their debut in high society. Everyone would love for the chance to escort an emerging character in Azell.

Azell clicked his tongue.

“A young lady shouldn't speak such words. I have no interest in them.”

“The palace maids have an appearance standard they have to pass, so they are all beauties. They also know how to carry themselves, since they are of noble birth. You still aren't interested?”

“Ms. Enora. Are you perhaps trying to sneakily paint yourself as a beauty?”

“Oh my. Are you denying it?”

“Ms. Enora is more cute than beautiful.”

“If you talk like that, you won't be popular with the women, Sir Azell.”

Azell couldn't help, but laugh when he saw Enora put on a sullen expression. Then he spoke.

“Anyways, I'm thankful for the offer, but I will have to decline. I'm not planning on accepting any invitations.”

“What? Are you serious?”

Enora asked as if she couldn't believe what she was hearing.

This was a chance of a lifetime for Azell, who had been recently knighted. Even if one was a skilled martial artist, it was hard to advance through the ranks without any background. That is why he needed to make his face known to the nobles. It was a precious opportunity where he would be able to build personal connections with those in high society.

She was young, but Enora had worked for the throne. She understood how things worked here. She couldn't help, but think Azell was being naive on how the world works.

“Please think about it one more time, Sir Azell. You won't be able to get this kind of opportunity even if you tried in the future. If you don't capitalize on this opportunity, it won't matter how many meritorious deed you do in the future. You'll end up running around endlessly in a circle.”

“...wow, Ms Enora. I'm a little bit impressed right now.”

“What?”

“No, you really sounded like an adult, who had gone through all sorts of hardships.”

“Please be serious when I'm talking about a serious topic.”

Enora's pouted once again. Azell laughed.

“It's a compliment. Ms Enora is a noble, but you grew up in the country. You are still young, yet you understand how the noble society works in the capital. It's very surprising. Moreover, you've only been a royal maid for less than a year. Ms. Enora is very smart. Of course, you wouldn't have become the princess' personal maid unless you were very smart and perceptive.”

“Jeez. You are making me blush with all the praises you are giving me.”

Azell's list of innocent praises made Enora's face turn red.

Azell spoke.

“I know what you are worried about. However, I don't want to become successful through that method. At the very least, I want some freedom for awhile. I don't want go head first into troublesome businesses.”

“Ha-ah. Sir Azell is too weird.”

“Well, as a royal maid, Ms. Enora would see it that way. Anyways, hurry up and pick what you want. The princess is probably waiting for us.”

Soon, Enora had picked a mountainous pile of female items, and she exited Azell's room in delight.

# Chapter 57 - Dragon Demon Prince (4)

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## 5

They were reunited after only a day, but Arrieta looked completely different from the appearance Azell had known. She really looked like a princess in her feminine clothes. She had her hair up and was swearing a silver circlet with a gem embedded in it. She wore a white dress with silver and light blue trimmings. She was breathtakingly beautiful.

Azell spoke after he stared at her absent-mindedly for a brief moment.

“...I'm surprised.”

“Mmm? About what??”

“For a brief moment, I thought you were a different person.”

“I didn't realize that this was such an unflattering dress. I suffered through 2 hours to wear all of this.”

Arrieta tossed a joke toward him. However, the fact that she had suffered through 2 hours was the absolute truth.

Azell queried.

“Do you always wear those kinds of clothes inside the palace?”

“No way. I've worn more comfortable clothes than the ones I wore on the road. For two hours, I've been the subject of my two maids playing doll. I would never do this everyday. It's been awhile since his majesty has asked me to breakfast. Moreover, he'll probably have various people gathered there so I have no choice in this matter.”

Yesterday, Arrieta went through the trouble of dressing up, but her appearance had been an extension of what he saw during the trip. It was an outfit which allowed her to pull out and use her sword at any time.

Today Arrieta was perfectly dolled up as a lady of the royal family.

The maids displayed their skills over two hours, and it wasn't an exaggeration to call the result a work of art.

Azell grinned.

“I guess I'm lucky today.”

“Yes, you are. This isn't something you can see everyday.”

Arrieta spoke as she lifted the tea cup that had been filled by



Enora. After she savored the scent of the tea, she asked her question.

“So your popularity exploded in just one day?”

“Yes. I have a mountainous pile of invitations.”

“The nobles of the capital have nothing better to do than whisper entertaining rumors. It can't be helped. I bet it's annoying for you.”

“Yes. Princess knows me well unlike Ms. Enora.”

“What did Enora say?”

“She informed me how the noble society works like an adult.”

Azell told her what had happened, to which Arrieta laughed.

“I see. Well, if you were someone capable of thinking in such a way, it would have been the right advice. The opportunity to showcase one's ability is quite precious for someone without a background. Enora's advice is correct.”

Enora's face became red at those words. Arrieta enjoyed seeing Enora's expression, but she let out a bitter laugh when she looked at Azell.

“However, no matter how I look at you, you aren't someone who is driven by promotion of rank.”

“If I was, I would have already given my pledge of loyalty to princess.”

“Hoo hoo. Well, if you want it, I can still give you a pretty decent position.”

“I'll have to decline.”

“That's too bad. So I heard you received a recruitment offer from Seigar?”

“Yes.”

“Seigar is greedy about gathering talented people. When he heard about you from me and teacher, I assumed he would go looking for you. Did he bother you much?”

“Not at all. He cleanly backed off after I declined him once.”

“Is that so? How unexpected. Ah, you might receive a similar offer from my teacher soon. He'll try to scout you to the Duchy of Tarantos instead of recruiting you for the throne.”

“Of course, I'll also decline that offer.”

“Of course, you should do that. Or else I'll be very miffed.”

“However, I do plan on visiting the Duchy of Tarantos.”

“Mmm?”

Arrieta was puzzled. She couldn't fathom why Azell would want to go to the Duchy of Tarantos.

Azell spoke.

“I have to go collect on the bet I won from the duke.”

“Now that I think about it, you are 3 wins ahead of him. You'll have to ask for something comparable. What are you going to ask for? I'm guessing it isn't money.”

“I have something in mind. Moreover, that is the reason why I have a favor to ask of you.”

“To me?”

Arrieta tilted her head.

After Azell started staying at the palace, spending most of his time at the palace's library. He had a chance to visit a place with so many books. He knew this was a precious opportunity, so he wanted to gather as much information as he could.

The palace library held about 6 thousand books that he was able to view. It was a huge task to even determine which book to read. There was enough books here to overwhelm his senses.

The Nadick Empire's library he had visited before he went to sleep was of a similar size.

It was the same now as the time before he went to sleep, the method of printing hadn't progressed much. One had to transcribe all the books by hand. Fortunately, there was a magic that would allow a single person to transcribe and produce several books at a time, but the books didn't really circulate into the public. Even a noble with a passion for books only had several dozen in their collection.

This was why he couldn't help but be surprised at seeing 6 thousand books in a single place. Moreover, there were over 100,000 books if one counted the books in the forbidden section.

‘Well, these are mostly Imperial Record. I wouldn't mind seeing the forbidden texts.’

Most of the forbidden texts were literature that insulted the throne or the gods. From Azell's perspective, he wondered if he could find the information he wanted in those books.

Azell received help from the librarian and he found the history books dealing with the era he was interested in. He also read the books regarding the current situation of the continent.

This allowed him to clearly find out how the current 7 kingdoms divvied up the Nadick Empire's territories. Unfortunately, the marquise of Karzark wasn't in Rulain. It was within a different country.

“It would have been impossible considering where it was located at.”

He had already expected this. Unless the Rulain kingdom was much larger than the other countries and held a supremacy over the other countries, the marquise of Karzark was too far away to be included in the Rulain Kingdom.

Azell decided to stop reading about the current information at that point and focused on the historical side.

“Poot. Wow... This is amazing.”

Eventually he ran across records of himself. As the person who had actually experienced the events, he found the stories embarrassing or funny. Normally, after discussing the techniques of the heroes, the history changed depending on the inclination of the historian and the inclination of those in power. There were different interpretations to the events, and the history became distorted. There weren't any negative distortion about Azell. Most

of his deeds had been embellished.

It was understandable, since he was the legendary hero who had defeated the Dragon Demon King Atein. Moreover, it was largely influenced by the fact that he hadn't gotten involved in anything after the war. Officially, it was recorded that Azell had suddenly gone into hiding. There were various theories and idle imaginings regarding his disappearance.

“It wasn't my intention, but my life as a hero transitioned into something of a mystic legend.”

His walk through life had turned into a legend. Moreover, his end was too mysterious that it evoked the romantic imagination in people. The record of himself was written by strangers. Since they analyzed and imagined their own versions of his life, he was unfamiliar with a lot of the stories. It really made him wonder if this was really about him.

As he kept reading the books, the suspicion he held turned into a certainty.

‘Those Dragon Demon King worshippers are amazing.’

They had manipulated the history from behind-the-scenes. The record regarding the Dragon Slayer's Ritual and Dragon Demon qi was expunged from the records. As a member of the Guardian Shadows who fought the Dragon Demon Worshippers, the legendary martial artist Kairen Tarantos had no knowledge about it. This was astounding as he was over a hundred years old.

‘They aren't the ruling power, yet they were able to manipulate the history to this extent....’

From Azell's perspective, he had no idea how they had done it. If they had conquered the world to publicly use their power and change the history, he would have understood such a result. However, they had done this while hiding in the dark parts of the society. Was it possible to extinguish the knowledge that had been spread across the world?

‘I get their intent. However, the problem is now figuring out how they were able to do this...’

He could easily guess why they attempted to manipulate the history in this fashion. A human had to go through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to create Dragon Demon Qi within oneself. It was a necessary process. This was the only way a human could get strong enough to defeat the Dragon Demon King Atein. At the very least, Azell had earned transcendent power through this method. There had been no one like him.

‘Did the Great Darkness affect the world that much?’

The Great Darkness made the world go crazy, and it created cracks where the Dragon Demon King worshippers could worm in. Maybe this impossible task would have been possible during that time.

‘So what were the Guardian Shadows doing during that time?’

According to Kairen's explanation, the Dragon Demon King worshippers had to hide from plain sight even though they possessed great power. They had failed to conquer the world. However, the history had been manipulated and they had succeeded in severing the passage of knowledge. Wasn't that a bit strange? It was hard to accept that the confusion caused by the Great Darkness was the reason for all of this.

‘Hmmm.....’

Azell fell deep within his thoughts. A familiar presence stimulated his senses.

“If anyone saw you, they would think you are a scholar instead of a martial artist.”

It was a handsome young man from the Dragon Demon race with long black hair, Kairen.

The Royal Library wasn't accessible to anyone. However, no one would stop the Dragon Sword Duke if he said he wanted to read some books.

He approached Azell and looked at the opened books.

“Do you have a lot of interest in history? Oh wow? You are even reading up on a hero with the same name as you?”



“Hahaha. I became interested in the Dragon Demon King worshippers.”

This was the excuse Azell had given. The Dragon Demon worshippers ran at him without a regard for their lives just because he had the name that was considered to be soaked in sin.

“I've also looked at the record about the heroes in the Dragon Demon War, but I couldn't take it seriously. There were too many absurd stories. Those who claimed to be historian were all filled with hot air...”

“Please give me an example. What part was unbelievable?”

“Mmm. For example....”

Kairen thought for a brief moment at Azell's question before he answered it.

“I think the account is in one of the books you have opened her. It's the part where they smashed apart the Dragon Demon Army's machination at the Lithia Lake.”

The famous general of the Dragon Demon Army, Encinder, was known for his meticulous control over his monsters. He was able to make the monsters move like a human army, and he had dealt fatal blows against the human army.

Originally, the Lithia lake was very deep, but Encinder had made

a dam upstream to block the water flow. In time, the lake was shallow enough to walk across it. Encinder's troops acted as if they couldn't contend with the humans as they were being pushed back. The human army was baited into the lake. Encinder had broken the dam. He had tried to drown the human force numbered of over 3000.

Kairen couldn't help but laugh.

“If one uses one’s common sense, it’s obvious no one should be able to counter this tactic. According to the records, that wasn't the case.”

“What does the records say?”

“The might hero Azell Karzark parted the flood of water coming down on the army with a single cut of his sword. Then the Archmage Carlos used his magic to disperse the current, and there were almost no casualties to the troop. Do you think that even makes any sense?”

Anyone, who heard the story would think the story was groundless. Kairen shook his head from side to side.

“The Lithia Lake isn't a small lake. If you actually see the Lithia Lake for yourself, you would realize how absurd that story actually is.”

Azell swallowed the words that had almost popped out at those

words. He put on a bitter smile.

‘...No. That really happened.’

If one read it through the records, it sounded absurd. However, Azell and Carlos really pulled that off. If he wasn't a person who could do such a task, then he wouldn't have been able to win against the Dragon Demon King Atein in a fight.

‘At the time... That bastard Encinder had a priceless expression on his face.’

They had broken the carefully laid out plan using such a ridiculous method. Encinder was a man ruled by logic. However, when his troops were in danger of losing, Encinder's mind broke. In the end, he couldn't run away from Azell's sword and he had died in that place. It had been a critical loss to the Dragon Demon King's army at the time.

## Chapter 58 - Dragon Demon Prince (5)

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Kairen continued to speak. He probably could never guess what Azell was thinking at that moment.

“This is why you should skip around half of the records regarding Azell Karzark. He was very popular, and he was considered to be a sacred hero. There are a lot of exaggerations regarding him.”

“Do you perhaps dislike him?”

“Me? Do I dislike Azell Karzark?”

“Yes.”

“No way. I also was a young man, who listened to his legendary exploits, and it made my heart beat faster. However, this makes me want to look at his exploits through strict standards. Even seeing his exploits through such stringent standards, he was really incredible. This kind of blatantly false stories devalues his legacy. These foolish bastards don't understand that.....”

“...ah, I understand. I'll take your word to heart.”

Azell quickly stopped Kairen from speaking any further. If Azell left Kairen alone, he would continue to give endless praise regarding him. The praises was akin to a mental attack.

“Hmm. Now that I think about it you do look similar to Azell Karzark.”

“Do I?”

“At the very least, your appearance is similar. There aren't that many portraits left, but his physical characteristics are almost identical as yours. Even your name is quite the coincidence. You even share his name. Wasn't that the last name of Azell before he was elevated to nobility with the name Karzark?”

“.....”

Azell could only let out cold sweat as he listened to Kairen. He hadn't expected Kairen to know all that.

‘In the official records, the last name of Karzark should be the only one recorded. Was my other last name passed down through oral tradition?’

Azell realized he had been too lackadaisical. It was understandable. When he had woken up, he wasn't planning on coming up with some elaborate story to trick everyone. He had responded to his situation as if everything would eventually work out somehow. Truthfully, if he had told people he awoke from a 200 year sleep, who would believe him? This was why he didn't put too much effort into hiding, who he was.

Kairen spoke.

“Your parents probably was well acquainted with the knowledge regarding Azell Karzark. I feel as if they intentionally named you after him. If that's true, your real last name probably isn't Zestringer.”

“That might be true. Hmmm.....”

Fortunately for Azell, Kairen was very practical with his reasoning.

It was normal for the people of the world to have several names. Normally, a person had their name and family name. However, there were those who used their blood relative's name as middle name. This was why there were some really long names.

For example, Arrieta had one too. Officially, Arrieta's full name was Arrieta Essendria Tiaris Rianda Weil Rulain. When she was born, she was named by the elders of the royal family, and those additional names were just added on to her original name.

This was also the reason why Kairen knew the Marquis Karazark's former last name was Zestringer. It also was the reason why he wasn't suspicious of Azell's identity right now. If someone suspected him of waking up from a 220 year sleep just because he had a suspicious background, that person was the abnormal one.

Kairen spoke.

“Did Arrieta tell you something unnecessary about me?”

“She asked me whether if I had any interest in taking up a position in the Duchy of Tarantos. She said you will offer me a position.”

“Hoot.”

Kairen snorted at those words. There was a meaningful pause, so Azell tilted his head in puzzlement.

Kairen hesitated before he continued to speak.

“You kicked away a position prepared for you by my pupil. If I give a similar proposal and suffer the same result, I will lose face. I've prepared a more attractive proposal.”

“What's the offer?”

Kairen started laying out his proposal, and the content was something Azell would have never guessed.

“Why don't you show me the Dragon Slayer's Ritual in my territory?”

It had been 5 days since he started staying at the palace. Azell received an invitation from Boar. He was invited to the Marquis Zilred's mansion.

Kairen had decided to leave with Kairen towards the dukedom of Tarantos, so his days of living at the palace was numbered. This was why he accepted Boar's invitation when he had time.

They were on a carriage heading out of the palace, when Boar spoke.

“You must be very popular inside the palace. Even I heard all the complaints about you not accepting any invitations.”

“If I stacked all the invitations, it would reach the ceiling. I'm an utter stranger, yet they are showing such fervor to meet me. I feel like some rare animal.”

Azell grumbled. The invitations kept coming in at a rapid pace. On the fourth day, he ordered the maids to gather them into a pile before delivering it to him rather than delivering the individual invitations to him throughout the day.

Soon, the carriage reached the Marquis Zilred's villa. When Azell got off the carriage, the building was very large compared to the other luxurious buildings at the heart of the capital. He was a bit impressed by it. The front gate was so far from the villa that one had to ride a carriage to get there.



“What a stately mansion.”

“It pretty much has everything one needs. It even has a practice yard.”

“Hey. Did you perhaps bring me here to spar with me? It is unnecessary. The Dragon Sword Duke comes everyday to bother me for that very reason.”

“You really are monopolizing him. I might become jealous.”

“If you were pestered every day by him, you wouldn't be saying that.”

Azell grumbled. He had a daily sparring session with Kairen at the palace. It really was...

‘It's fun. I can't deny that.’

Azell was a martial artist by nature, so it was fun to match one's skill against someone of his own caliber. The numerous fights he experienced as he sparred gave him an incredible thrill. The best vacation in the world couldn't compare to this.

Boar spoke.

“Anyways, you don't have to worry about him. He won't bother you today. Let's spend the night away drinking alcohol.”

“I would welcome such an activity.”

During the trip, he was always on his guard, since he had to worry about the presence of enemies. He hadn't been able to drink alcohol to his heart's content, since he awoke in this era. Just the mention of such an activity brightened up his day.

When they arrived at the villa, Giles was there. Azell asked him a question.

“I was wondering where you were when you never returned to the palace. Were you here the whole time?”

Giles had been staying at the mansion as Boar's guest. When Azell saw Giles' attire, he spoke in a playful manner.

“Anyways, doesn't these clothes suit you more than your military uniform? You could probably become a popular man in the high society.”

“Don't make fun of me.”

Giles put on a bitter smile. However, it was as if there wasn't any truth to Azell's words. When he took off his military uniform and armor, he looked like a young noble in his finery. He gave off such a delicate air that it was hard to believe Giles led a dangerous life of an enlisted man.

Boar's family wasn't all living in the capital. There was the Marquis Zilred, who worked for the crown, and his wife. There was also the second son Reewin, who was a 2nd rank administrator. At dinner, Boar's parents introduced themselves to Azell, and they showed a lot of interest in him. After sharing food and conversation, Azell and Giles was guided towards Boar's room. Boar was there, and he showcased a high quality alcohol he had taken out from the cellar. Azell and Giles let out their praise.

Boar spoke.

“It seems my father has a lot of interest in Sir Azell. He was lamenting the fact that he didn't have an unwed daughter he could introduce to you. He was thinking about introducing you to a relative. However, I stopped him by saying you won't make your debut in high society, and you will be leaving soon.”

“So you can't stand seeing me being introduced to a pretty young lady?”

“I'm happy you understood my true intent.”

“Oh right. How come sir Boar isn't in the marriage talks? At your age, it wouldn't be strange if you were a married man by now.”

Boar was 26 years old. He was the same age as Azell. As a son of a prestigious noble house, it wouldn't have been strange if he was married with a child on the way.

Boar was ill at ease as he talked.

“Mmmm. Lot of things came up. It hasn't been too long, since I've joined the Royal Knights, so I told my parents to wait a little bit. I'm not that well known in the high society as a knight.”

“So you don't want to be introduced to a lady by your elders. You want to look for a nice young lady for yourself.”

“That's exactly it. I had to live through an occupation that was filled with burly men, since I wanted to climb the ladder of success. I want to experience the fragrant flowers the high society has to offer myself.”

“Uh-huh. You haven't even washed dishes before, so you shouldn't talk about hardships.”

“Let's stop talking about that story now.”

Boar laughed During the journey, he had come to realize he had grown up without realizing what the real world was like. After his self-awakening, Boar had changed a lot.

Giles queried.

“So how long do you plan on staying in the palace?”

“I'm not sure. I'll probably leave a day after tomorrow at the

soonest. At the latest, it'll be four days.”

“That fast?”

Giles and Boar was surprised. Azell didn't have any place to go, and Arrieta was showing goodwill towards him. They had assumed Azell would stay a bit longer in the palace.

Boar spoke.

“I had heard you were leaving soon. I guess it's true.”

“It's really bothersome to live in the palace. If I stay there any longer, I don't know what annoying work might follow me around. I don't want to even imagine it. I don't want to draw the attention of the throne to me.”

He could ignore the invitations of the nobles, but he wouldn't be able to turn down an audience from the throne. Since he had no desire to assimilate into the capital's noble society, it would be best for him to disappear before anyone showed too much interest in him.

Boar laughed.

“You really are... You are different from any person I know. In my view, the lack of desire to advance in one's station is a problem.”

“Is that so?”

“Maybe I'm saying this, because I was born into a noble family, and I'm working for the throne... Wasn't there an old saying that said a talented hawk hides its talons? It basically means modesty is a virtue.”

“Why are you suddenly bringing up such a saying?”

“It's a saying that shouldn't be followed in the noble society. It wouldn't be a problem if you don't have the ability. However, if you slack off, while having the capability of advancing, than the nobles will ostracize you. If one could use one's talons to further the name of the family, one should do so. This is how they think. This is why my 2nd brother has had such a hard time.”

“He's already a 2nd rank administrator for the throne at a such a young age... Did he use to play around?”

“He was very smart even when he was little, and he loved to play around. Father had to force him to gain experience by dumping work on him, then he made my brother take the test to qualify for the administrator position. This caused a lot of hardship for me. My parent were very strict on me saying I shouldn't turn out like my older brother.”

“I see.”

Boar had the talent to become a Quadruple Master at a young age, but it seemed a lot of effort had been made to support him. His parents wanted him to maximize his potential for the family, and Boar had tried hard to fulfill that expectation. There was a side of him that was like a naive young noble, but he had trained himself in earnest as a martial artist.

‘Promotion...’

Enora and now Boar was bring up such a topic, and it suddenly made him think about his past.

It would be hard to imagine it by looking at the current Azell, but he had thirsted for advancement during the Dragon Demon War. There were two reasons behind this desire.

First, he was merely a lowly mercenary, and he was angry that no one acknowledged his accomplishments. He had accomplished many deeds that was worth merit, but the nobles and knights claimed his meritorious deeds as their own. It deeply angered him.

He had fought and fought in this unreasonable system. He fought until he was promoted. He became a knight, and he made personal connections that would shore up his background. He survived and fought through impossible situations, and his reputation spread far and wide. No one dared to cross him any more.

The discontent he had in the past disappeared, but the desire to advance in rank consumed him as he kept fighting. The reason was simple.

‘These bastards are unworthy. I have to seize a station of power!’

...the sense of crisis continued. He felt helpless at the sight of his superiors, who were incompetent. He had to constantly risk his life, because of their incompetence. Moreover, the people with noble spirits were dying because of them.

There were even those who had made traps to get rid of Azell, since he was advancing at a blinding speed through meritorious deeds. They tried to kill him even when it was a situation where the human race couldn't afford to fight with each other.

‘Hoo.’

Azell laughed as he thought about his past.

It was all an affair of a bygone age. He didn't have the burning desire to want to stand above others. He didn't have any reasons to do so.



## Chapter 59 - Dragon Demon Prince (6)

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‘Still, there might come a day when I might have to do it again.’

After consecutive battles with the Dragon Demon followers, the sense of foreboding was getting stronger. He had a premonition that the great darkness might descend on this peaceful era once again.

Boar asked a question.

“So where do you plan on going after leaving the capital, sir Azell?”

“For now I've decided to travel with the Duke. That's why I have to leave so soon. I have to match the Duke's schedule.”

“Ah, the Duke is heading back?”

“He hates the palace life more than me.”

Kairen hated making public appearances. It was a dislike that had been developed from his younger days. However, he was too important of a figure. Once people heard the news that he was in the capital, everyone made a big fuss in trying to see him. Even the royal family acted the same way, so Kairen had no choice, but to be dragged every which way. It was normal for Kairen to drop by to spar and complain to Azell.

Giles spoke.

“I envy you. I have a half a year vacation, but I have no idea what I'm going to do in the meantime.”

“The Western Border guards are quite generous. They gave you a half a year vacation.”

Boar interrupted the conversation with his words.

“Well, Sir Giles was chosen as the representative of the Western Border guards, and he was in charge of guarding the princess... Moreover, they probably wanted to give him a chance to visit his homeland. Wouldn't his family be happy if he suddenly dropped by after being gone for awhile?”

“In theory, yes...”

Giles' expression darkened after giving that answer. Boar was taken aback, and he asked Giles a question.

“Uh. Did I perhaps say something wrong?”

“No, it isn't anything like that. Have I ever told you about my household before?”

“You never did.”

“There isn't much to say... Our family of the Viscount Vince isn't in a good situation right now.”

As if Giles was embarrassed, his face became a little bit red as he explained his situation.

The Viscount Vince was a family in turmoil even though they held the position of Viscount. They were a noble family located in the countryside, so the family had been well off. However, the family started to decline in wealth during the time of Giles' grandfather. Gile's grandfather was a bit out of touch with reality, and he squandered away the family fortune through gambling. Then a famine had come and the monsters started to cause trouble in his territory. His grandfather couldn't deal with the problems, so in a flash, the family's fortune had nosedived.

In the end, they had to sell most of their lands in the province. Basically, their province only consisted of a small town now.

“From the time I was young... My father kept drilling into me that I would have to go out into the world to build up the family name once again.”

Before he even hit puberty, a sword was put into Giles' hand. He swung it until several dozen blisters formed on his hands. His father had seen Giles' grandfather run the family into the ground, so he reared Giles with an extremely strict attitude. Giles had become a Quadruple Master at such a young age, because he had spent such harsh childhood.

“However, my family had fallen as far as it could, so what power did we have?”

Even if his house had fallen on tough times, he was still an offspring of a noble family. This was why he had the rights to become a knight. However, that was the end of the road. He didn't have any personal connections, since his irresponsible grandfather had severed all those connections. He had to gain experience, but he couldn't choose where he wanted to enter.

After he thought hard on it, he decided to enter the kingdom's army. Since he didn't have the background to succeed, he had no choice, but to earn it with his own hands.

“It's funny, but when I entered the army... It felt as if I could breathe once again. Do you know about observing the military discipline? It felt like a vacation compared to what I got at home.”

Giles' father required Giles to be the ideal noble. From an early age, he was put through a hell-like training regiment. He was required to learn martial arts, and etiquette. He even had to accumulate knowledge. He was trained, so he wouldn't embarrass the family no matter where he went. The royal army felt like heaven compared to his house.

When he heard the story, Boar let out a mumble as if he was letting out a groan.

“I never knew you had such circumstances.....”

It was completely opposite of how Boar was brought up. From the time he was young, he had victory after victory, because of the power of his family. Boar realized how advantageous his upbringing had been.

“I'm thankful to the princess. With my unremarkable background, I would have needed a very long time to build up my career in the Western Border guards. I might have rotted there my whole life.”

As the representative of the Western Border guard, he had been successful in completing his mission of accompanying Arrieta to the capital. He even received praise from the king. Basically, he had done a meritorious deed that would be acknowledged in most circles.

Boar poured alcohol into Giles' cup.

“Drink up. You've sewed the most difficult first button now. From now on, I'm sure your fortunes will improve. The Dragon Demon Princess remembers you now. I'm sure you will receive a good opportunity in the future.”

“Thank you.”

Giles laughed in an embarrassed manner. The night deepened as they drank the alcohol.

Boar was heading towards the palace for work, so Azell followed after him the next day. He had drunk a lot of alcohol late into the night, so he was basically half dead when he awoke the next day.

“Ooh-goo-gook. I guess I have a hangover. It's been a really long time, since I've felt this pain.”

Boar, who was riding in the same carriage, laughed.

“I'm actually marvelling at this situation.”

“Why?”

“I'm surprised there is something you are weaker at than me. I thought you would be strong against the alcohol.”

“I think I used to be strong against it... Well, my memory is a bit fuzzy on that topic. I'll just have to be careful from now on. Ooh ooh.”

In Azell's prime, he never suffered from the effect of the alcohol. No matter how much he drank he would only get a small buzz. He never became drunk, and he never suffered from a hangover. The reason being his body had been too sturdy after going through the Dragon Slayer's ritual.

He thought about those times as he continuously guzzled down

the alcohol. However, he had become much weaker against alcohol than before. This caused his tongue to be tied into a knot, and his eyes started to close. He had experienced something new as he started talking nonsense. Fortunately, he hadn't blacked out.....

‘I should have used that technique early on.’

There was a Spirit Order one could apply to protect one's mind and body from the alcohol or any other drugs. When Azell realized he was quite drunk, he used the technique to avoid passing out. However, it had been too late to avoid the hangover.

“Ooh-oohk. I never realized how torturous it is to ride a carriage.”

“This road has been service not too long ago. How can you say that? If we were on a dirt road, you probably would have thrown up by now.”

Boar looked fine, since he didn't have any hangover at all. He enjoyed feeling the sense of superiority, and he continued to make fun of Azell.

When Azell returned to the palace, he had went into meditation to try to escape his hangover. He wanted to use Spirit Order to expel the remnants of the alcohol out of his body. However, his head was spinning and throbbing even though he was standing still. It made him want to throw up, so it was very hard to fall in a meditative state.

‘I can do it! I've bled from being cut by swords, so why shouldn't I be able to work through this?’

Azell gritted his teeth, and he focused his mind. However, it was harder to fall into a meditative state right now. It was harder than the time he had been stabbed and blood was pouring out of him. The progress was slow.

“Ooh-ah. You smell like alcohol!”

Enora, who came to find Azell, blocked her nose as she furrowed her brows.

“Jeez. How much alcohol did you pour into yourself that the smell of alcohol is this bad?”

“Mmmm.”

Azell, who had barely been able to enter a meditative state, let out a bitter laugh as he opened his eyes.

His surrounding was most definitely thick with the smell of alcohol. It wasn't the smell of someone, who had been drinking alcohol. It smelled as if he had sprayed alcohol all over the surrounding.

“I expelled the alcohol that had accumulated within my body. I feel a little bit like a living person now.”



“You can do such a thing?”

“Yes. I'll have to wash first... Is there some urgent business I need to know about?”

“Not at all. Also, you'll be put in an awkward situation if you don't wash yourself. Hurry up and come back after you wash yourself.”

Enora pushed Azell's back, and she exited the alcohol smelling room as if she was running away.

After a wash, Azell came back looking somewhat tidy. However, his condition was still not too good.

‘Ah-ooh. It seems I'm going to lose today.’

Azell frowned when he thought about Kairen, who will surely look to spar Azell today.

Enora spoke.

“The Princess wants to have dinner with you tonight. Since Sir Azell is leaving soon, she would like to see you before you leave.”

“All right. I'll have to recover until dinner time, so I could be passed as being normal. Ah, also.... Ms. Enora. A question

suddenly popped up in my head. Do you mind if I ask you a question?”

“What is it?”

“It is about the conversation you had with the princess before we left the Western Border guards.”

Enora tilted her head in puzzlement. It seemed she had no clue what he was talking about.

Azell let out a bitter laugh as he asked the question.

“Didn't you argue with the princess that your prospect of marriage would be ruined if you couldn't follow after the princess?”

“I didn't argue with her. How can I dare...”

“Anyway, I don't know why that was relevant reason for you to travel with us. I think the princess felt the same way.”

“It's common in my homeland.”

“Huh?”

“If a member of the noble family can't even carry out a single

task given to her, then she would be told she wasn't qualified to be married.”

“It was such a trivial reason?”

“Trivial? You shouldn’t speak so lightly about it, Sir Azell. It is a very important issue.”

“Mmm. Still, Ms. Enora is still very young...”

Azell was speaking when he saw Enora eyes draw down like a hatchet. He quickly changed his words mid-sentence.

“..., but you are a young woman at a blooming age. You shouldn't take on such a risk for that reason alone.”

“But it's the same for the princess.”

“Huh?”

“The princess was born into the role of the Dragon Demon Princess, and it is the main reason why she has to put her life on the line to fight unlike the other royalties. I hadn’t thought that highly of the princess when I first became her maid... Now I think the princess is an amazing person now that I've travelled with her.”

When she had been assigned as the personal maid of the famous

Dragon Demon Princess, Enora had been disappointed after seeing her. Arrieta was dumbfoundingly beautiful, yet she was a sleepyhead. Moreover, she was too relaxed within the palace.

However, when she saw Arrieta fight on the battlefield to fulfill her own duty, Enora's view of the world went into a violent upheaval.

“There is a saying that my father always repeats. The nobles are treated with respect, because they are the first ones to put their lives on the line when tribulation erupts. It’s their duty.”

The Barony of Baire was located in the countryside, and her family didn't own many troops. Of course, Baron Baire and the men of the family led the charge when a threat appeared on their lands. People respected the Baire family, and it was a point of pride amongst their family.

Arrieta resembled the men of Enora's family. Arrieta was young, yet she didn't complain when she was thrust into dangerous situations. She didn't resent the burden she had been born with. She didn't despair about her situation, and she used her power for others. Enora was impressed by her noble character.

“This is why I don't want to run away. Princess is fighting so hard, yet it would be very sad if there's no one by her side to even brush her hair. How sad would it be if everyone ran away from her side? ”

“Ha....”

Azell stared blankly at Enora for a brief moment.

“Hahahahahaha.”

He couldn't help it as his laughter burst forward. As if she was embarrassed, Enora's face was blushing.

“I...I'm talking about a serious subject yet you are laughing at it! How rude!”

However, Azell's laughter wouldn't end. He was laughing so hard that tears started to well in his eyes.

Enora let out her anger as she looked at Azell, who had been barely able to stop himself from laughing.

“You are so twisted, Sir Azell!”

“...ah, I'm sorry. I had no intention of laughing at you.”

“At least, say it like you mean it.”

“I'm being honest. It reminded me of a memory from the past.”

Azell had a far away look in his eyes, and he put on an empty smile.

“There was a child, who had spoken similar words to me.....”

‘...ahjushi is bleeding to save everyone. If there's no one to wipe ahjushi's face, it would be very sad.’

At the time, everyone ran away, since they wanted to save their own lives. When despair came to him, someone had stayed by Azell's side. She had spoken those words to him. Everyone had shunned the child for being unlucky, but the girl's words had saved Azell.

If he thought about it, the girl had been a bit younger than Enora. She didn't have parents, so she had lived day to day by wandering around. However, she had a quality that made her shine brilliantly.

It had been like that during that era. The darkness that covered the world was so thick that when one found someone that shone, it amplified their brilliance.

For a brief moment, he was lost in his memories. Enora asked Azell a question.

“What happened to that child?”

“She found a place to live. I don't know what happened to her afterwards.”

The girl was being shunned by the people, so Azell found her a place to live. He had never seen her afterwards, but he wanted to believe she had lived a happy life.

Enora pouted as she spoke.

“Hoong. I'll forgive, because of your story.”

“Thank you for your generosity.”

“If you don't speak, you might actually be lovable.”

Enora's lips curled.

# Chapter 60 - Dragon Demon Prince (7)

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9

He wanted his body to return as close to normal by tonight, but it wasn't progressing as he expected. It was always easier to ruin one's body. Recovery was always much more harder. Moreover.....

“Hoo hoo hoot.”

It was much harder, because there was someone interfering with it.

As Azell had predicted, Kairen had come looking for him. Kairen immediately realized what kind of state Azell was in, so he didn't want to miss out on this opportunity. He insisted on a spar, and he won. Moreover, when both of them went to dinner with Arrieta, Kairen was acting giddy. Azell hated seeing such a sight, so he spoke some words to Kairen.

“You feel good about winning against a sick person?”

“Sick? Where's this sick person you are talking about? Are you perhaps calling a hangover a sickness?”

“Ughhh.”



Azell made a resolve to get his revenge tomorrow.

Arrieta spoke.

“Even the great Sir Azell can't win against a hangover.”

“I have nothing to say.”

“That reminds me, I guess you weren't able to make it happen.”

Kairen let out a bitter smile at those words.

“Unfortunately, it turned out like this. Seigar is a bit busy.....”

“He's heading out towards a battlefield in four days, so it was inevitable. Moreover, Sir Azell is in this state, so I thought it would be better not to push too hard to make it happen.”

“What are you talking about?”

Azell was confused, so he asked the question. Kairen started to give an explanation.

“Mmmmm. I wanted you to fight Seigar before you leave the palace.”

“With the prince?”

“Yes. However, Seigar's schedule is too busy. We'll look for another opportunity at a later date.”

“You weren't even going to ask me if I wanted to?”

“If I suggested it and Seigar agreed to it, do you really think you could refuse me?”

“Well... I guess not.”

“Since you already know this, what's the problem?”

“Jeez. You are a bit too much.”

“Still, it is rare to see you turn down a fight. I thought you would want to have a go with Seigar.”

“I really don't want to draw any more attention to myself from highly placed people. You said the prince covets talented people. This has a chance to turn into an annoying affair.”

“That is the reason why I want you to fight him.”

“What?”

“Seigar looks down on humans.”

It had been awhile, since Seigar had met his teacher. This was why he told his teacher all the stuff that had been weighing on his mind. From his words, Kairen discerned that Seigar was overestimating his own abilities, and he also picked up that Seigar was dismissive of humans.

“Mmm. You are saying he is a bit extreme in his views. He considers humans to be weak.”

“I think so, but it's a bit more nuanced than that. He knows humans are an existence that could fill his shortage of competent help. This is why he is looking for talented individuals. However... Basically, he thinks no matter how great a human is, the human would still be weaker than him. Even Arrieta and I acknowledge the child's excellence in terms of martial arts.”

“Since one of you is a Dragon Demon and the other is a Dragon Majin, I can see why he would think that. However, isn't there a lot of people with sufficient skills in the royal knights?”

“There are some useful people. However, if we limit the selection to human knights, there's no one who could beat Seigar.”

“Is that so?”

Azell was a bit surprised.

He was well aware of Arrieta's skills. When he met Seigar, he

could tell his Dragon Demon magic was on the same level as Arrieta. However, he was young and he lacked real battle experiences, so Azell assumed he would be less skilled than her.

‘So does this mean there aren't any knights that are stronger than the princess?’

He could guess the quality of the knights in this era by the information given by Giles and Boar. Still, it was quite shocking to him. There should be a lot of veterans amongst the royal knights, and there would be those, who made their name through their martial arts....

‘How far has the standards fallen? Or was it only the Rulain kingdom's knights that was weak?’

Arrieta was most definitely strong. However, during the Dragon Demon war, there were plenty of Spirit Order practitioners, who had been stronger than her.

Kairen spoke to Azell, who was lost in his thoughts.

“This is why I have to break that line of thought before it settles into his mind. Dragon Demon worshippers might take a shot at him. He might suffer a great loss if he didn't take them seriously just because his opponents were humans. However, this isn't something I can do.”

“How about the knights under you?”

“It isn't as if there isn't someone, who could fulfill that role. However, I wouldn't be able to call Seigar to my lands without a special reason. I also don't want to ask a knight to abandon all his work to travel to the far away capital just to spar with a child.”

“I guess the knights of the Dukedom of Tranatos is more skilled than the royal knights?”

“I trained them myself. Isn't the answer obvious?”

“...ah, yes.”

Azell wasn't surprised at all at Kairen's shameless answer. Kairen snorted.

“Well, you can go judge their skills for yourself later. Anyways, that was the reason why I wanted you to spar with him... Unfortunately, the opportunity never presented itself.”

“Hmmm. Aside from the royal knights..... What's the standard of knights in the entire kingdom?”

“There a good amount of skilled fighters. Aside from the knights in my territory, there are a lot of those, who are loyal to their territory. They aren't associated with the throne, since they aren't trying to advance their career.”

“I see.”

“There are some talented people on my lands that you might find interesting. You should look forward to it.”

“It really does feel me with anticipation.”

Azell was expressing his true feeling. After he woke up up from his sleep, he had been constantly disappointed by the human Spirit Order practitioners he had met. He wanted to meet proper practitioners.

Arrieta let out a bitter laugh.

“If I had it my way, I would like to be trained by teacher once again... It is too bad I don't have the time anymore.”

“It sounds as if you are blaming for my short stay in the palace.”

“That's exactly it. Since you are already here, I wouldn't mind if you stayed here for a long period of time. It would be great if you could guide me.”

“I don't want to. Do you realize how many people bother me just for the chance to speak to me? It'll be hard for me to train you properly in this environment. When Seigar starts getting serious about his activities, you guys can alternate getting some time off. You can come when that happens.”

“If that could happen, it would be great.”

Arrieta let out a sigh. As the Dragon Demon Princess, her freedom was much more restricted than the members of the other royal families. The recent event made her realize the need to get stronger, but it wasn't something that could be solved in a short amount of time. She needed a teacher like Kairen to guide her, yet he was saying such words....

Arrieta didn't know this, but Kairen wasn't living a life of leisure. It was rumored that he didn't leave his territory often, but he actually traveled around various parts of the kingdom on Guardian Shadow business.

Kairen spoke.

“Anyways, you should learn a little from Seigar. It isn't guaranteed that the Dragon Demon worshipers won't try to kidnap you again. You have to increase the number of your subordinates.”

“I've been thinking about it. However, sir Azell kicked my proposal away, so it's very unfortunate.”

“I'm really sorry about that.”

“Next time try saying that with a straight face.”

Arrieta snorted.

Until recently, Arrieta hadn't thought about gathering troops directly under her. If she, the Dragon Princess, was kidnapped by the Dragon Demon Worshippers just because she was worried about others sacrificing their lives for her. Then it would basically be putting the cart before the horse. This was why Arrieta had a change of heart.

Kairen spoke.

“I can't always be here... I'll send you some useful men from my domain. I have plenty of guys, who are ambitious.”

“Those kinds of considerations will be accepted by me with thanks. It is hard to gather people here.”

As it had been expressed by Seigar when he met with Azell, it wasn't easy to gather talented people in the capital. The fact that Kairen would be sending useful people was a huge help to Arrieta.

Suddenly, Azell spoke.

“Isn't there someone close to the princess that fits the description?”

“Mmmm? There's someone like that?”



“It's sir Giles.”

“Ho oh.”

Arrieta's eyes twinkled. Azell spoke.

“It'll be hard to get someone employed by the throne. However, sir Giles is affiliated with the Western Border Guards, and I don't think there will be much push back if you ask for him. Also, Sir Giles has been part of the Western Border guard for a short amount of time.”

“Hmm. I see... It's something worth following up on. What's your personal opinion on this?”

“If princess gives him the offer, he'll jump right over.”

Azell gave a short summary about Giles' family situation. Arrieta nodded her head.

“Now that I know his situation I cannot overlook this matter. I'll give him an offer tomorrow.”

“Thank you. Also, Duke-nim.”

“Mmm?”

“Can we delay our departure from the capital for four days?”

“Why so suddenly?”

“I have something I have to do now.”

Azell laughed as he spoke.

## 10

Once Arrieta made a decision she unhesitatingly went forward with her business. On the next day, Giles was called to the palace, and he was given the offer. He accepted the offer, and he gave his allegiance to the princess.

Giles was struck dumb as he arrived at Azell's quarters.

“What just happened?”

He had just finished taking the pledge of loyalty to Arrieta, but it didn't feel real to Giles. Everything felt like a dream, and he was worried about losing everything if he awoke from his nap.

Azell spoke.

“What do you think happened? Everything worked out well.”

“Sir Azell.”

“You don't have to worry about the aftermath. She is going to give enough supplies to the Western Border Guards, so they'll be properly compensated. She'll give you a good salary, and you'll even be provided with a house in the capital. You'll have to be fitted with armor and uniforms befitting your new job....”

“Mmmm. I have no idea what I should say. First... I can only give my thanks to you.”

Giles lowered his head. Since he had traveled with Arrieta, he had hoped to gain something out of it. Basically, he wanted to be noticed by someone in a high position. However, he never imagined everything would turn out so smoothly.

Azell grinned.

“I spoke to her since I was at the right place. If the princess hadn't witnessed your prowess during the trip, this wouldn't have gone as smoothly. Therefore, you don't have to thank me.”

Azell raised his sword, and he flicked a finger against it. The blade rang out in a clear note.

“As I've said before, I'm going to leave here soon. Before I leave, I have something I want to accomplish, so I called you here.”

“You said you wanted to borrow me for four days... That's what I heard. What's going on?”

“I want to teach you something.”

“You want to teach me?”

"You are quite outstanding as a martial artist, Sir Giles. You were able to become a Quadruple Master at your age, and that is an amazing achievement. Moreover, you have excellent mastery over your abilities. However....”

After he watched Azell speak, Giles suddenly felt a suffocating feeling.

‘What is it?’

Azell was starting to look much more bigger. It was as if he was shrinking away from a powerful enemy. Azell’s presence dominated his sight, and Giles could hear nothing except Azell's voice. Before he knew it, his body shrank in on itself, and he was breathing hard.

“You don't know the essence of the Spirit order. This is a problem. In the future, the danger faced by the princess may be much more sinister.”

Giles was half submerged in a state of panic. Azell's intricate mental wave was causing confusion to Giles' senses.

In the next moment, the confusion disappeared as if water was flowing out at low tide. Giles' sense became less restricted. Giles spat out a false breath.

“Huhk.”

# Chapter 61 - Dragon Demon Prince (8)

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“The essence of Spirit Order is in controlling the mind. I think the Dragon Demon worshippers called it the Secret Arts.... You have to learn that. If you don't, you won't be able to stand up against them.”

Once he decided to leave Giles next to Arrieta, Azell decided to teach him the Secret Arts he had accumulated over the years. The threat from the Dragon Demon worshippers wasn't over. Maybe the reason why he was awoken in this era was to once again prepare the world to face the great darkness. If that was true, then he needed comrades that will be capable of fighting against that darkness.

“Spirit Order prioritizes the training of one's minds. Do you know why?”

“If one doesn't train the mind into not thinking like how a normal person's mind operates, one won't be able to be cognizant of the magical energy. If one can't even register the presence of magical energy, one won't be able to use it.”

Basically, if one wanted to possess magical sense, one had to train the mind first. That was his answer.

Azell shook his head from side to side after hearing Giles' answer.

“No. That is one of the answer, but it isn't a complete answer.”

“Then what is it?”

“Sir Giles. We aren't like the Dragon Demon race. We weren't born with fast movements nor can we exhibit incredible strength..”

“Mmm?”

“Spirit Order practitioners are supermen. This is why we are able to reach a state that can't be reached just by training the body..”

Azell and Giles moved like lightning in the eyes of normal people. They wore heavy armor, but they could take out a normal person before he could react or even become aware of their presence.

“Usually, a human's senses increase as one trains one's body. However, there is a clear limit one reaches. One can overcome this limit and obtain power through Spirit Order. However, we'll become too fast, and too strong. Our senses won't be able to keep up.”

The training of the mind was a preparation made to ready oneself for becoming a superhuman. One needed senses that could detect much faster than a normal human, and the incoming information had to be processed at high speeds. One needed to think at the speed of light to be able to properly use a superhuman body.

“If you don't have that basic foundation, you won't be able to use

the ability you will learn later. It would be considered fortunate if you don't perish from being unable to control your abilities. In other words, a fast horse of great pedigree is the best mount for an experienced rider. For people who aren't expert riders, they won't be able to handle the fast and out of control horse”

“.....I've never thought about it from that perspective.”

“Of course, you have to think about such things. You have to train your mind first to develop your magical senses. Once your body grows beyond the limit of a normal person, you won't have to worry about your mind not being able to keep up. However, you have to keep this in mind. Spirit Order isn't something inherent to humans. It is a method that was developed using other techniques that dealt with controlling the senses.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Humans aren't a race that can intuitively control their senses. Breathing, and feeling is done instinctively, yet it can be trained. One could learn about how to utilize the senses and how to focus, but that is only scratching the surface. While training the mind, one has to find out the structure and principle behind the senses. Only then will you be able to use it in unimaginable ways. Moreover, through this exploration, one can also find out how to use the opponent's senses against them.”

For example, Azell could freely control his eyesight. Even if he had his eyes open, he could make it so that his eyes saw nothing. He could also eliminate certain colors from his vision. In darkness, he could ignore the darkness and light to see the contour of an



object.

Giles was confused.

“Is such a thing possible?”

Giles could control his senses. However, he couldn't set various conditions like Azell. He could either slow, quicken or focus his senses... Normal people could do what he could do to a lesser extent. He was able to do it more freely.

Azell spoke.

“When I saw you and Sir Boar, it was quite shocking to see that you didn't know such basic truths even though both of you are Spirit Order practitioners. Since you don't know such obvious truths, you won't be able to properly use your power. Look here, sir Giles. Let's us first try to move our body without using our muscles.”

“Is it like trying to move an item that has fallen off one's body?”

“That's right. It is like manipulating a marionette. However, instead of an outside force making you move, you will need to be able to control everything from the inside. Your first step is to do this only through your mind.”

Azell spoke. Giles was wondering if such thing were possible. Azell explained further as if he was trying to hammer out the

doubt out of him.

“Don't be suspicious. If you accept in your heart that what I'm teaching is impossible, then you will forever be surprised by what I can do.”

“Mmmm. All right.”

The light inside Giles' eyes changed. He had seen what Azell could do. If these were the core teachings of the Spirit Order, there was no reason why he couldn't learn how to do it.

“Four days is too short to teach you any advanced techniques. However, I can teach you the essential points. The progress your mind can make is all up to you.”

There wasn't much he could teach in 4 days. However, Giles had a very firm foundation. Azell would teach him the theories that had been erased in the past 200 years. It would give Giles a base he could build on.

Giles asked a question.

“Sir Azell. What is your identity?”

“Unfortunately, I can't answer that yet. However, I will tell you some day.”

Azell smiled as he spoke.

## 11

He had a dream.

It was about the distant past. He dreamed of a time when everyone was in a state of despair.

As a mercenary in the Dragon Demon war, he travelled around various lands to fight the Dragon Demon army. Azell had given up hope when he saw the state of the world. No matter how many times he swung his sword, or rescued people nothing really changed.

He couldn't do it himself. He had to climb up to a position where he would be able to move a lot of people.

If so, he needed to become a knight. After he learned everything he could from his second teacher Balf, his skills was nothing to be embarrassed about. The road to becoming a knight was wide considering his level of skill.

However, another obstacle was waiting for him after he became a knight. As a low ranking knight, he had to fight where he was ordered to fight. The harsh reality of this calamity was almost on top of people, yet the human organizations were continuously run in an irrational manner.

What truly made Azell suffer was the fact that people's hearts were diseased.

The humans were starting to get together to resist the great darkness called the Dragon Demon King. However, not all humans were filled with noble sentiments as the people unified.

The lives... No, future of the race was being threatened yet humans weren't able to shake the darkness within their hearts.

If that wasn't true, Azell wouldn't be in this situation.

This castle held a significant tactical importance.

The castle was built at a geologically advantageous location, so a small force could effectively defend against enemy forces. If this place fell, the enemies could easily access the heart of the lord's land. It would be a much easier to advance if this castle fell.

This was why if the lord of this region had his head on straight, he would invest a lot of soldiers and supplies here.

Unfortunately, the lord refused to make the logical choice. When a castle owned by a relative fell, the lord recalled most of his troops in fear to protect himself.

Of course, once the soldiers retreated out of the region, the place

was exposed to the enemies. The people living in this region were about to be slaughtered, but the lord only cared about his own safety.

‘What a trash lord.’

The moon was shining brightly in the night. Azell was leaning against the rail of the castle wall as he looked at the people evacuating. He cursed the lord.

When the lord's order arrived, 80% of the troops defending the castle left. Those left behind, including Azell, were soldiers, who had ignored the lord's orders. The small number of soldiers stayed behind to buy time, so the people could run away.

The people were busy running away with their possessions on their back as if their heels were on fire. None of the people volunteered to stay behind to sacrifice themselves.

Azell, who was trying to protect these people, really felt bitter inside. However, what made him feel more bitter was... People were discriminating fellow humans even in such a situation.

“Aren't you going to run away, ahjushi?”

The one, who asked the question, was a dirty little girl. At a glance, one could tell she was a street rat.

Azell spoke as he saw the people exit through the castle wall.

“Even if one views other people as trash... Someone has to do what's right.”

“Wa. Ahjushi speaks in fancy words. People might think you are a noble.”

“I'm a low ranking knight, so that means I am a noble. Also, stop calling me ahjushi.”

Azell grumbled. Azell had just turned twenty, and he was just entering his prime. He hadn't shaved or washed for several days, so he just didn't look the part.

“You should go.”

“No. I'll watch ahjushi fight here.”

“Then you might die. I'm staying behind so children like you may survive. How would I feel if you do stayed?”

“If ahjushi didn't save me, I would have already been dead. So it's ok. Anyways, if I do go, they'll just tell me I'm cursed again.”

This girl had been labeled as a cursed child, and she was treated with contempt. The child possessed abilities that made other people afraid of her.

However, the incidents weren't anything nefarious. When the child got mad, objects moved on its own. There were times when a fire started where she stayed or someone nearby got sick....

Any sane and knowledgeable person shouldn't be afraid of this child. This happened often with people, who were born with magic. However, once a negative image was associated with the child, every bad thing that happened was blamed on the child. One could tell this was what had happened.

As despair washed over the people, they needed someone they could abuse. They blamed everything on the child, and they funneled their hate and fear onto the child.

Azell had rescued the child from being killed by the people, who was filled with madness.

“You aren't cursed, little kid.”

“How do you know?”

“I know. You were just born with a bit of a unique physical constitution. You might be able to become a good magician one day. That is why you shouldn't care about what other people say about you. You have to live. You should value your life more.”

“But.....”

Bboooooooooo—!

Azell could no longer listen to the child's words. The Dragon Demon army was here.

“Hurry up and run away.”

Azell stroked the child's head then he ran across the castle wall.

From that point on, the remaining troop fought a long battle. They showed great fighting spirit as they were ready to throw away their lives. The soldiers fought as they overcame the numerical disadvantage, and a mountain of corpses was starting to form.

Seven hours had passed. From the distance, the sun started to rise, and the surrounding started to brighten. The Dragon Demon army was mostly composed of nocturnal monsters, so they pulled back. The soldiers, who barely survived, got ready to retreat.

“Kooook.....”

Azell was one of the survivors.

In the darkness of the night, he had cut down his enemies like an evil spirit, and now he was tired. The numerical disadvantage was so vast that random cuts from enemies had injured him. If he wasn't a high level Spirit Order practitioner, he would have died from the loss of blood.



It felt as if he was about to fall over, but he dragged his body off the castle wall. A person approached him. Despite the continuous battle throughout the night, the female child hadn't left this place.

“You... Why didn't you leave?”

When Azell asked the question, the child brought out water she had acquired from somewhere. She started laughing as she wiped the blood off Azell's face with a clean cloth.

“Ahjushi is bleeding to save everyone. If there's no one to wipe ahjushi's face, it would be very sad..”

“.....”

Azell absent-mindedly stared at the child for a moment. It hadn't happened when he was fighting in a hopeless situation, but now he felt tears well up in his eyes.

He was barely able to push down his emotions. Azell discreetly avoided her gaze as he mumbled.

“I told you I'm not an ahjushi.”

# Chapter 62 - Those Who Follow The Prophecy (1)

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1

The Plain of Darkness was located north of the continent.

There was a magical barrier placed there that prevented humans from getting close. Even in the past, it was place of brutal coldness. There were dragons who weren't friendly to humans that lived here. The place was overflowing with monsters. On top of that, after the Dragon Demon King worshippers were defeated by the humans, they had also settled in the Plains of Darkness. Everyone knew this location was the nexus of evil yet no one was able to mount an attack against this place.

For the Dragon Demon worshippers, this place was basically their holy land.

Niberis had returned to such a place.

“This place.....”

Regina couldn't help but feel surprised after she arrived at the Field of Darkness.

She had gone through the process of coming to the the northern end of the continent. It was a place where human feet had never

treaded. It was completely different from what she had imagined.

If they had traveled here by normal means, they would have had to travel an incredibly long and treacherous road from the Rulain Kingdom to this place. However, they were able to significantly cut down on the travel time.

“So this place is the Plain of Darkness....”

Regina's emotional eyes took in the surrounding.

There was a circular structure made out of metal behind her. It was decorated with magical adornments. The circular structure was slowly rotating, filled with darkness that made it look like a bottomless pit.

This was a great magical artifact left behind by the Dragon Demon King Atein. It was called 'the Road of Emptiness.'

They had used this to jump several thousand kilometers in an instant. It was an artifact no one in this era could replicate. It was the reason why the beings that called the Field of Darkness their base was able to travel to various places on the continent. It was their secret.

Niberis spoke.

“Think of this as an honor. Usually, a minor being like you isn't allowed on this land.”

“Yes.”

Regina looked around her surrounding. There was a majestic castle made out of cold bricks in front of her. During the Dragon Demon war, it was a place built by the Dragon Demon King as a fallback position. It was secret base named the Dragon Demon castle. It had been over 200 years since it was built, but it was still in perfect shape.

When Niberis and Regina exited the room where the Road of Emptiness was installed, someone was blocking their path.

“You've returned safely, Niberis.”

He was a young man of the Dragon Demon race with gorgeous blonde hair. His two horns curved backwards. It looked as if his horns had been carved out of ice, and the color had been seeped in afterwards. The dark green color of the horns was the same as his eyes. Also, a bright gem on the back of his hand was letting out light. The Dragon Demon Stone also held the same color as his eyes.

Niberis looked at him with cold eyes.

“You worried over nothing. Did you perhaps think I would be killed by the enemy?”

“No, I just... My intentions are pure. I was just worried about

you. I heard this mission was very dangerous.”

“Kieren. I thought you received the same mission as me? How did it go on your end?”

“My target wasn't a member of the royal family.”

“Whatever.”

“Mmm. So... I did succeed.”

The youth of the Dragon Demon race called Kieren avoided her gaze as he spoke. Niberis' endlessly cold attitude made the young man uncomfortable.

His answer made Niberis eyes grow colder.

“I guess I should congratulate you. Could you get out of my way now? Unlike a talented man like you, I am incompetent. I have to tell the queen of my failure.”

“Niberis.”

“Get out of my way.”

“Mmm. All right. I know you are tired. I'm sorry for bothering you right after you've returned.”

Kieren got out of the way as he felt sorry for himself. Niberis' cold attitude brushed by him. Regina peeked a glance at him, then followed after Niberis.

‘What's the relationship between those two?’

The organizations of the Dragon Demon King worshippers were moving all the time, so Regina didn't know much about her superiors. The Plain of Darkness was bestowed as a holy land by Dragon Demon King Atein, and everyone who lived here ruled at the top of the organizations. They were the backbone of the Dragon Demon Worshippers.

Regina only knew Niberis was an important person from the Plain of Darkness. She had no further information regarding her. Regina wondered what kind of power structure existed here.

“Regina.”

Niberis, who had been in front of her, called out her name. Regina instantly broke out of her thoughts and she answered Niberis.

“Yes.”

“Follow this servant to my accommodation, and stay there.”

Niberis had already called for a servant. He looked like a normal servant from a noble's household. Regina looked at the human servant and she was shocked once again.

“What is miss going to do?”

“I'll have to go see my grandmother. I'll be back by dinner. If I'm going to be late, I'll send you a message.”

“Understood.”

When Niberis walked to the end of the hall, the human servant tried to guide Regina away. However, Kieren was already there next to the servant.

“I'll be borrowing this person for a moment. You go do your chores.”

The servant immediately obeyed his words. Regina looked at him with a shocked expression.

Kieren spoke.

“What's your name?”

“My name is Regina. I'm affiliated with the Dragon's Shadow.”

“Dragon's Shadow? Mmmm... It seems it is one of the lower organizations Are you working directly under Niberis?”

“I'm sorry, but I do not know. When miss came to the Rulain Kingdom, I was just ordered to help her....”

“Well, we keep everything as need to know basis for the lower organizations. Then I guess you don't know much about this place.”

“I know nothing except that this place called the Plains of Darkness, and it is considered to be our holy land.”

“Hmmm. You weren't born here, and the information restriction hasn't been lifted yet. So you shouldn't have the qualification to be here... No, Niberis brought you here so there must another reason.”

Kieren mumbled as he introduced himself.

“I'm Kieren Baldazark.”

Regina was surprised by his words.

Baldazark.

He was one of the 4 Dragon Demon Generals, who had served under the Dragon Demon King Atein.



‘The Blood shed by a star’ Baldazark.

‘The Hammer that swallowed the scream of the land’ Reygus.

‘The Sword that parts a storm’ Almarick.

‘The Goblet containing the heaven's tears’ Aunsaurus.

They were of the Dragon Demon race, and each of them had the strength of a thousand men. They had made their enemies quake just by stepping onto the battlefield. The Dragon Demon race was known for the outstanding power they were born with, but there were those who were exceptional even amongst the Dragon Demon race. Moreover, these four beings had been acknowledged by the Dragon Demon King. Their strength was at an earth-shattering level.

Kieren spoke.

“You are thinking about the right Baldazark. I'm a direct descendent of Duke Baldazark.”

“Of course.”

This meant he was on a different level as the Dragon Demon worshippers. He possessed a noble background. Cold sweat started running down Regina's body. Kieren spoke softly to her.

“You don't have to be afraid of me. Since Niberis brought you here, I have no thoughts of harming you. I just want to listen to your story.”

“Which story do you want to hear?”

“I heard a report saying you were with Niberis all this time... Yes. I want to know exactly how she failed. I would like you to give a more detailed account.”

## 2

At that time, Niberis arrived at the center of the Dragon Demon castle.

This place had been built as a safe haven for the Dragon Demon King Atein, so a throne had been built in this place. The throne remained empty for his eventual return. The audience chamber ended and a split hallway appeared. At the end of the hallway, the room of the queen who had mingled her body with the Dragon Demon King existed. It was the living space for the queen, who had borne his children.

The room was sunken in darkness.

There were windows in the room with curtains that hadn't been drawn. The sun was still in the sky outside, yet this room was

ruled by pitch black darkness. In the middle of all of this, a woman was buried in the cushion of a large chair, and she had her eyes closed.

Like Niberis, she had long black hair and was a woman of the Dragon Demon race. She had an aura of calmness and elegance. In terms of human criteria, she looked to be around early to mid 30s. The horn above her ears were black and her Dragon Demon Stone was the color of gold.

“I'm back, grandmother.”

She was Niberis' grandmother, and she also held the highest position in the Plain of Darkness.

She was the Dragon Demon King Atein's first wife, Aincera.

This was the reason why Niberis was treated like a treasure. She was a direct descendent of the Dragon Demon King Atein.

Aincera opened her eyes at Niberis' greeting. She had golden eyes, which was the same color as her Dragon Demon Stone. At the same time, the darkness surrounding her disappeared and the natural light filtered in.

“Niberis. You came back unharmed. I'm happy.”

Unlike the content of her words, her expression was cold. However, it wasn't as if she was intentionally putting on a cold

expression. Her face was like a finely made sculpture and her face didn't show any emotions.

Niberis lowered her head.

“I'm embarrassed. I failed to carry out my mission.”

“Don't blame yourself. We gave you too dangerous of a mission when we knew you were short on experience in the first place. The reason for this result is our lack of preparation.”

“But... Kieren succeeded.”

“Kieren's mission was not as difficult as your mission. Moreover, Kieren has much more experience carrying out missions compared to you. He also tasted plenty of defeat. You shouldn't feel a sense of inferiority over this.”

“.....”

“It is good that you have the desire to improve yourself. However, if you get fixated on a small mistake that occurred in the past, you will lose your future. You should never forget this point.”

“...I understand.”

“I want to ask you one thing. I'll get the detailed report from you later... I have something I have to confirm with you before all of

that.”

“What is it?”

“I heard a human with the name seeped in sin had interfered with you.”

Niberis bit her lips at those words. When she thought about Azell's face, she felt humiliation surge up inside her.

Aincera asked her a question.

“Did that person perhaps possess the Dragon Demon Qi?”

“Dragon Demon Qi? How can that be?”

Niberis was taken aback. No human in this era possessed Dragon Demon Qi. The Field of Darkness had used all their resources to eliminate those who had Dragon Demon Qi. Then they had cut off any information regarding it from being passed on.

Aincera asked her a question.

“Are you sure?”

“I'm sure. If that man did have the Dragon Demon Qi, why didn't he use it when his life was in danger? Moreover, if he did possess

it, I couldn't guarantee that I would have come back here alive.”

“Hmmm.....”

What she said was true. Niberis had great confidence in her talent and strength, but Aincera had hammered into her the fear of the Dragon Demon Qi. Moreover, Niberis had also experienced it. They had erased the existence of the Dragon Demon Qi from the world, but it existed in the Plain of Darkness.

Niberis spoke.

“However, the man with the name seeped in sin had knowledge of the secret arts, and he knew about the Dragon Slayer's ritual.”

“He knew about the Dragon Slayer's ritual? Really?”

There was a change of expression on Aincera's statuesque face. There was a slight expression of surprise on her face as she waited for Niberis' answer.

“Yes. Moreover, I suspect he had killed a dragon through the Dragon Slayer's ritual.”

“Such an event had happened....”

Aincera's expression became serious.

He knew about the Dragon Slayer's ritual.

That fact in itself was shocking. However, he had also killed a dragon through the Dragon Slayer's ritual?

Niberis spoke.

“Of course, this is all a conjecture. The eyes were missing from the dragon's corpse, so I think there is a high chance that the Dragon Slayer's ritual had been carried out. However... There are too many holes in that conjecture.”

“Why do you say that?”

“The man with the name seeped in sin wasn't strong enough to defeat a dragon by himself.”

Niberis still didn't have the answer to this question. What method did Azell use to kill the dragon?

Aincera calmly listened to Niberis' explanation.

“His magic was weak and he didn't possess any Dragon Demon Qi. Yet he knew about the Dragon Slayer's ritual and he had carried it out... It is a set of circumstances that we can't ignore.”

“I believe we need to keep an eye on him from now on.”

“All right. I'll arrange it myself.”

“Grandmother. Please let me...”

“No.”

Aincera spoke in a small voice, but Niberis' body shook as if she had been whipped.

Niberis had failed, because of Azell. She wanted her revenge. This was why she wanted to volunteer herself for this job. However, Aincera expressed her disapproval before Niberis could speak.

“You've already been exposed to the Dragon Sword Duke. You will have to lay low for a while. I'll allow the release of a new magic manuscript, so you should behave yourself and learn the magic.”

“...Yes.”

Aincera had made her resolute intentions known, so Niberis didn't dare to push any further on this issue. Aincera closed her eyes again, then spoke as she called the darkness back.

“You can go now.”



# Chapter 63 - Those Who Follow The Prophecy (2)

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3

Normally, the nobility moved with a big party that denoted their station. This was especially true for those with the rank of Duke. There were numerous retinue that would do the miscellaneous work.

However, Kairen was starting the fire and drawing the water from the stream by himself.

Azell spoke.

“I never thought I would see the sight of you starting a fire, and drawing water.”

Of course, Azell wasn't fooling around, while Kairen was doing the miscellaneous work. He ran around the forest to hunt down the birds and the rabbits. Since he was a high rank Spirit Order Practitioner, he was able to use his mental wave freely. It felt like cheating using those skills to hunt.

Kairen responded in a calm manner.

“If there is no one to do it, then I have to do it. It isn't as if these tasks will finish on its own. Do you want to do all of it, since you

are my junior?”

“I'll decline.”

Azell's skillful hands skinned the rabbit's leather, and he worked with the meat. He grumbled, while doing this.

“Would it have been better if we packed some provisions from the palace?”

“Mmmm. I never expected you to run so poorly. It was my mistake in overestimating you.”

“.....”

Azell pouted.

The two of them were traveling from the capital to the Dukedom of Tarantos by 'running'

It wasn't a figure of speech. They were running. Kairen had refused the horses given by the throne, then he cut down as much luggage as he could. Then he made a straight line towards the Dukedom of Tarantos.

It might sound crazy to other people, but it was the most logical method for Kairen.

‘That is the fastest way.’

He could run faster than a galloping horse, and he was able to ignore the terrain as he ran straight towards his destination. This was why he could travel much faster than traveling on a road.

However, he had misjudged Azell's stamina.

“Tsk tsk. We traveled at such a slow pace, yet you are tired after running a mere 20 kilometres.”

“...if someone overheard us, they would think you were talking in wrong units.”

When Kairen clicked his tongue, Azell grumbled.

They had traveled at a much higher speed than a normal person could sprint, and they had covered 20 kilometres. They cut straight through mountains, forests, and prairies. It was a much rougher journey compared to traveling the same distance on a proper road.

It had been only one month, since Azell had awoken in this era. During that time, he had rebuilt his body by a little bit, and he had increased his magic reservoir. However, it paled in comparison to his prime. When one continuously moves across a long distance, stamina was more important than technique. There was no know-how that would make this easier, so Azell tired pretty fast.

Kairen spoke as he chewed on the cooked bird.

“Since your swordsmanship was so outstanding, I might have overestimated you. I'll have to adjust my view of you. I planned on arriving there by tomorrow night...”

“.....”

If one measured the distance from the capital to the Dukedom of Tarantos in a straight line on a map, the distance was over 500 kilometers.

“I guess we will target one week as the travel time. Are you going to say you can't travel a mere 70 kilometers a day?”

“...are you trying to kill me?”

“Ho-oh. I really like the sound of you sounding weak.”

“Ughhh.”

“We should at least find a town to rest tonight.”

Kairen was humming as if he was in a good mood, and he opened up a map.

The two of them really travelled 70 meters everyday in a straight

line. As each day passed, his body was screaming out in pain, yet Kairen kept complaining that he was too slow.

‘Oooooohk! Just wait until I recover my strength! I’ll definitely show you a bitter taste, old man!’

At such a young age, he never expected to pine for the old days. He grinded his teeth. Azell cursed Kairen inside, but he covered the fixed distance they had set as a goal. He went to sleep completely exhausted.

Four days had passed.

“Mmmm?”

Suddenly, Kairen's brows furrowed. They were climbing a mountain when he noticed smoke rising in the distance.

“Azell.”

“Yes. I see it.”

Azell also saw what Kairen had seen.

The two didn't speak any further, and they started heading towards the location. One would need a professional gear to descend the mountain slope, yet they ran down as if they were running across flat ground. They stepped on trees as if they were

flying, and they head towards the source of the smoke.

They arrived at the foot of the mountain, and they saw the fields of the village being razed by fire. A band of bandits that included orcs were plundering a village.

“Mmm?”

The two of them had been heading towards the village at high speed, yet they suddenly stopped when they detected a different kind of being. A person was on top of a tree. This being was hiding himself with a Concealment technique as he looked down at the village.

‘A magician? No, something is off.’

He wasn't using a high ranked Concealment technique, so Azell and Kairen could easily sense his presence. This person had an old hat on his head, and he was surrounded by a voluminous traveler's cloak.

They couldn't see his face. While this person was small in stature, they could sense a significant amount of magic from this being.

‘Dragon Majin? No, it doesn't seem like it... Perhaps?’

Azell detected the smell of Dragon Demon Magic from this person. Unlike those from the Dragon Demon race and Dragon Majin, this person only had a partial aspect of the Dragon Demon

Magic... Basically, he felt like a human, who had gone through the Dragon Slayer's ritual like him.

‘He doesn't look to be in the same group as those bastards.....’

It didn't seem plausible for such an unusually gifted magician to be part of a bandit group attacking a farming village. Still, how could he calmly look at what's going on unless he was part of the bandits?

-Let's go. If he is an enemy, we can face him at a later time.

Kairen had already come to a decision, so he spoke to Azell through Whispering. Then they immediately ran towards the farmer's village. An orc was on top of a female child ripping her clothes away. Kairen descended like a bird of prey.

Pah-hahk!

The orc's head was separated from its neck at the same time Kairen raised his sword.

Azell was following right behind him. When he arrived, a geyser of blood fountained into the air as Azell severed three necks.

“Ooh-ahk!”

“Who are these bastards!”

The two of them had attacked so abruptly that the bandits were a step slow in reacting. However, Azell and Kairen didn't care if they reacted or not. They just approached any bandit they saw, and they swung their swords.

The bandits had already killed a lot of farmers, and they were in the process of gathering women and children. The bandits thought they had already won, so they were focused on looting. They hadn't expected an ambush, so the bandits were being mowed down.

“W...who the hell are you bastards?”

A large man, who looked to be the leader, asked the question in shock.

Azell spoke as he walked towards him.

“Why should I answer your question? You guys are already dead, so there is no point in answering your.....”

At the same time, Azell's form disappeared.

“...question.”

The sentence came to an end from behind the man. The man tried to turn around in surprise.



Something was wrong. He was just turning his head, yet his vision was rapidly dimming.

Afterwards, the neck that was turning was cleanly sliced. His head slid to the ground, and a fountain of blood erupted from the wound.

Tuhl-suhk!

“Kyahhhhhhhk!”

The bandit fell in front of a woman, and she let out a scream. Azell flinched.

“Jeez. I made a mistake.”

“Your lack of consideration for others is troubling.”

Kairen clicked his tongue as he approached Azell.

There had been about 30 members in the bandit group, but it didn't even take 5 minutes to kill all of them. Maybe, if they were fully armed and ready to fight, the fight would have lasted longer. However, most of them had their pants down as they were about to violate the women. This was why everything ended so easily.

They released the people tied up by the bandits, and they

extinguished the flames burning up the houses. The surviving farmers all bowed their head towards the two men.

“Aigo! Thank you very much!”

While they were doing this, they looked at the two men with fear in their eyes. These two men had overwhelming power that allowed them to kill the bandits in minutes. Moreover, they could overlook Azell, but wasn't Kairen of the Dragon Demon race? Moreover, he wore black armor that covered his entire body. He was dressed like a knight, and the villagers could tell that this being was a noble.

“Hmmm. There is a farming settlement in such a rural area... Does the local lord here have a bad personality?”

Kairen asked with his head tilted.

He correctly guessed that these workers had run away from the rule of their lord to live as farmer inside the mountain. If a lord was merciless in his rule, one would occasionally come across such a situation. If there was a famine or a problem causing a poor harvest, these farmers couldn't meet ends meet if the taxes were high. Those who couldn't pay taxes and even criminals sometimes ran away to form a village.

This was why such a village didn't have the power to protect themselves, so they were subject to being attacked by bandits. They had escaped from being plundered, and killed. However, the problem was the fact that their savior was a noble.

However, Kairen thought outside the box regarding such issues.

“Well, you don't to be scared. You aren't a resident of my domain, and I'm not part of the bandits. I don't care what you say.”

“...you are very heroic in your temperament. However, is it ok for a great lord that holds the respect of the throne to be speaking this way?”

“Who cares? No one will overhear me here. Moreover, I have a more urgent business right now.”

After saying those words, Kairen glared at the magician atop the tree. The next moment he used his Instantaneous Movement to appear right in front of the magician.

“Uh?”

The magician was so surprised that he jumped off the tree. It seemed he hadn't expected to be found, since he was using his Concealment technique.

Kairen dropped in front of him. The magician was taken aback, so he asked a question.

“Why are you being like this?”

Kairen and Azell was amazed by his words. Doesn't he realize how suspicious he looked?

The two of them were a bit surprised when the hat half fell off the magician's head. He looked to be only 14 or 15 years old. He had curly blonde hair and blue eyes. This youth was looking up at Kairen with an expression that indicated he didn't understand the cause of Kairen's action.

Azell was especially surprised.

‘This little shrimp completed the Dragon Slayer's ritual? No way.....’

Soon, Kairen put on a cold expression as he asked a question.

“What's your identity? It doesn't seem like you are in the same group as the bandits.... Are you perhaps the mastermind behind this attack?”

“I have no ties to those people.”

“Then why were you hiding there as you looked on?”

“I was traveling nearby, and the bandits suddenly appeared. I hid, because I was afraid they would harm me.”

“By the look of it, you look to be a proficient magician. Didn't you

have any thoughts about helping the people being pillaged?”

The teen tilted his head at the question.

“I might die if I did. Am I required to do that?”

“.....”

His attitude was so matter of fact that Kairen and Azell got angry for a brief moment.

The teen put his hat back on. He stood up, and he dusted off his clothes.

“I know why you are asking me those questions. However, am I bound by duty to do what you suggest? It isn't as if I brought the bandits here. I don't know these people, so I don't have any sense of obligation to these people.”

“That is...true.”

Kairen spoke as if he didn't appreciate the young man's attitude.

The teen's words were very selfish, but he wasn't wrong. Even if this young man was a magician with strong magic, it wasn't guaranteed he would survive against bandits that numbered over twenty. He made a cold decision to prioritize his life over others. It was hard to berate him for that. He could criticize the youth on

moral grounds, but it wouldn't be productive to do so.

## Chapter 64 - Those Who Follow The Prophecy (3)

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While he was thinking this, Azell couldn't help, but ask the question.

“Still, the people were suffering yet you didn't think about helping them?”

Azell expected the youth to feel tormented by the guilt he felt, but the youth was extremely unperturbed. It was a face that said he didn't care if people around him was raped and killed.

The youth spoke.

“I did.”

“You did?”

“Yes.”

“.....”

Azell and Kairen looked at each other. His answer was unexpected, since he said it so matter of factly. The youth's expression was so nonchalant that his word didn't have a ring of truth.

The youth kept speaking.

“However, it was more important for me to save my life instead of helping them. Are my answers sufficient, Azell Zestringer?”

Shweeeng!

In a flash, a line of silver light appeared in front of the youth's eyes. When he realized something had flashed, Azell's sword point was already aimed at his neck.

“How do you know my name?”

## 4

The tense sense of danger swept over the youth. The youth spoke with a slightly shaky voice.

“I can easily give you the answer.... Can we do that after you put away your sword?”

“Do you want me draw a bloody line across your neck?”

“You are much more scarier than I imagined...”



The young man spoke in an awkward manner.

“I'm here to test whether you are the prophesied person. I am the Guardian Shadow's Keeper of Prophecy. My name is Leone. Will that be sufficient for my introduction?”

“You are part of the Guardian Shadows?”

Azell's brows furrowed. Kairen asked a question as if there was neither rhyme nor reason about it.

“A kid like you is part of the Guardian Shadows?”

“Age isn't that important when becoming a Guardian Shadow, Dragon Sword Duke.”

The youth was letting out cold sweat as he retreated backwards. Azell decided to sheathe his sword for now.

The youth named Leone spoke with a bright smile on his face.

“The only important thing is what one can bring to the cause and effect. Anyways, I was chasing you down, but this meeting was unplanned. Originally, I planned on visiting you both at night. You are overflowing with the sense of justice, Azell Zestringer.”

“I'm overflowing with the sense of justice... I have a mountainous amount of things to say on the subject, but I'll omit it

for now. Did you just say you were chasing after us?”

“Yes.”

“For how long?”

“It's been awhile. However, it was only today that I knew I would be able to catch up to the both of you.”

“Basically, you always knew where we were located?”

“Yes.”

“.....”

Azell's eyes held disbelief.

‘I wasn't able to feel their sight on me?’

This meant Leone had tracked down Azell using magic of farsight. Azell couldn't accept the fact that he hadn't been able sense the gaze that would have been upon him. Was there a technique within the Guardian Shadow that was able to avoid Azell's detection?

‘If I think about the time the Guardian Shadow first appeared, that could be a possibility.’

Azell was confident in his sensing ability, but he didn't consider it to be absolute. The Detection technique and Concealment skills had a biting or being bitten relationship. One couldn't predict, which techniques might gain the upper hand. When he thought about the first meeting where he saw the Guardian Shadow, he hadn't been able to sense it until it got within 20 meters of him....

Azell asked a question.

“How did you track us?”

“That's easy. I just had to ask for the Dragon Sword Duke's location from the Guardian Shadows. Since you two were traveling so fast, I had a hard time following the both of you.”

“...ah. So that's how it is.”

He could now understand why he didn't detect any gaze on him. They hadn't been monitoring Azell.

Leone spoke to the slightly dejected Azell.

“I'm sure you are a human, yet you are a vessel for the Dragon Demon magic. You aren't a Dragon Majin, yet...”

Dragon Majin was the offspring between a human and a being from the Dragon Demon race. As the line becomes more mixed

with humans, the special characteristics of a Dragon Majin disappeared, and a regular human was born. At that point, any trace of the Dragon Demon magic disappeared.

However, Azell held the scent of the Dragon Demon magic. This was caused by him absorbing a Dragon's power through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

Leone spoke in an interested manner.

“I have no idea why you would have the scent of the Dragon Demon magic. However, I've been told there hasn't been a human like you in hundred years.”

“Bullshit.”

“What?”

“You are saying that, but you are human. This undermines the credibility of your words.”

“Ah ah. I am... No, I should be seen as exception to the norm. We are looking for the being from the prophecy. He can't be one of us, yet he has to satisfy certain conditions.”

“The prophesied being? What are you talking about?”

“Unless I can confirm that you are the being foretold by the

prophecy, I won't be able to tell you.”

“This is also the first time I've heard about this. Why wasn't I informed?”

Kairen spoke. He had shown dedication in his work as a member of the Guardian Shadow, yet he wasn't informed of this fact. He was displeased that a young man knew more about this situation than him.

Leone spoke.

“The prophecy isn't known to all the members of the Guardian Shadows. The Keeper of the Prophecy knows it. The Keeper of the Prophecy are beings, who willingly dedicates one's life to the prophecy.”

“Sacrifice? Keeper of the Prophecy?”

“Only those who gives up on one's own future to protect and aid in the prophecy can become the Keeper of the Prophecy. This doesn't apply to you, Duke.”

“So being a dedicated member of the Guardian Shadow is insufficient? It seems secrets I don't like keeps popping up as time passes.”

“Well, it isn't as if I like my current situation. Still, the arrow has been shot, and it can't be withdrawn.”

Leone had a bright smile as he spoke. Azell asked a question as if he found it objectionable.

“If you are a member of the Guardian Shadow, don't you have the duty to protect the population from the Dragon Demon King worshippers? Yet you didn't stop the bandits in front of your eyes from pillaging the village just because you valued your own life more than theirs. Truthfully, I cannot trust your words.”

“You are severley misinformed about us, Azell Zestringer.”

“What?”

Leone spoke with a sour expression on his face.

“We aren't particularly burning with the sense of duty to protect the population. Moreover, we aren't doing carrying out the cause of justice.”

“Then what are you fighting for?”

“We want to eradicate the Dragon Demon Worshippers, and the final goal is to kill the Dragon Demon King once and for all. That is our goal. If one wants to save the people dying in front of one's eyes, it is the prerogative of the individual. However, it has nothing to do with the goal of the Guardian Shadows.”

“.....”

“By your expression, it seems you have a great misconception of us. I'll be clear. The Guardian Shadow isn't an organization that upholds justice. We fight against the Dragon Demon King and his worshipper. We just safeguard the human race from them.”

“Mmm.....”

Azell realized disappointment and anger was simmering within him.

Leone smiled as if he had a mask on his face. He had a bright smile, but his words didn't match his expression. He gave off a very eccentric feeling.

“If one had to choose between the duty towards humans and shutting down the Dragon Demon Worshipers, I would willingly choose the latter. That is what the Guardian Shadow is all about.”

“...I'll admit I misunderstood the intentions of the Guardian Shadow.”

Azell fought to push down his anger as he admitted he had a preconceived notion of the Guardian's Shadow.

‘They only want to stop the Dragon Demon Worshipers.’

Azell had gone through the Dragon Demon war. He had the noble idea of wanting to carry out justice for the people. However, the Guardian Shadows and Leone moved to a different standard.

Leone spoke.

“It is a relief that you understand us now. From now on, you won't look favorably at what we have to do to you. It'll be awkward if you misunderstand our intentions.”

“What?”

“You will find out once the night comes. Please be patient until then... If you don't mind, may I travel with you guys? I'll be following you anyways.”

“.....”

Azell and Kairen had big frowns on their face. Leone was still smiling as if he had a mask on his face.

## 5

Azell and Kairen departed the farming village, and they traveled to their destination at high speed. The two of them moved at a pace unimaginable to a normal person, yet the youth was unexpectedly keeping up. Magicians were able to fly through the air. This mode of travel was very advantageous, since terrains



didn't bother the magician. The youth flew at high speeds for a long time, yet he had enough energy to spare.

“Ho-ooh.”

When they reached a town, Azell rented out a room at an inn. He washed his tired body, then he fell into meditation within his room. Before he went into his mediation, Azell gathered a Magic Aggregate in both hands, and he drank it. Kairen asked in surprise.

“What are you doing?”

“I'm recovering my magic.”

“I've never seen such a method. Is it worth doing??”

“When one is trying to immediately recover one's exhausted magical reservoir, it is better than a calm meditation. If one wants to fill up one's Energy Pulse with dense magic, the normal way would be more effective.”

Basically, Azell was implying that he might need to use his magic soon.

Kairen asked a question.

“Do you think we'll have to fight that child?”

“There is no guarantee. However, when I heard his tone of voice, I don't think this meeting will be pleasant for us.”

“Hmmm. The Guardian Shadows is becoming more bizarre as I learn more about them.”

“You are a member, so you shouldn't speak like that.”

“However, I am angry that I was kept in the dark until now. They dared to use me, yet they hid the important information from me.”

Kairen looked to be in a very bad mood. He was called the Dragon Demon Duke, and he was revered by the people. In regards to information, he was always first to be informed. He was the one, who kept important information from others. He had never been on the other side of the equation. This was why he didn't like how this organization called the Guardian Shadow was being run.

Azell was recovering his magic when he slowly opened his eyes.

“...it's here.”

“Mmm? Can you feel something?”

Kairen still couldn't sense anything.

Azell spoke.

“I can't feel its energy. However... I can most definitely tell that it is 'watching me'.”

At that moment, someone was watching Azell from afar. Moreover, it seemed this being realized he was compromised. The being let out a ominous magical wave, and it stimulated Azell's senses.

Kairen's expression hardened.

“This is.....”

“It has the stench of Black Magic. It's probably an Undead.”

A being, who had used forbidden magic to overcome death, was making his presence known. This being let out his presence from afar. The presence was very dim, yet it was enough for the two of them to sense it.

Kairen asked a question as he watched Azell arm himself.

“Will you be ok?”

For the past couple days, Azell had been on a forced march, and he had accumulated a lot of fatigue. His body was exhausted, and his Energy Pulse wasn't in a good condition.

Azell spoke.

“In any fight, my opponent won't be considerate about what kind of condition I am in. The probability of finding a fair fight is the same as finding an opponent, who has lost his mind. It is very rare. The person expecting a fair fight, while a sword is pointed at one's throat, is the stupid one.”

“Sometimes, you say words that I really like. It puts me in a tough position.”

Kairen grinned as he followed after Azell.

The two of them erased their presence, and they secretly exited the inn. They stretched their senses into the surrounding, and they heard the whispers of restless spirits. They detected an ominous energy. This was an invitation being sent by their opponents.

Azell spoke.

“There are three of them.”

“What?”

“There are three of them including the one following us from the back.”

Azell pointed backwards. Leone was following them in plain sight.

Kairen spoke.

“The other two... Did you find this out through your ability to sense other people's gaze?”

“Yes.”

“That is a very desirable technique. I can feel a very dim sensation, yet I can't pin point it for sure....”

“I'll teach it to you later. Of course, I'll have to receive something in return.”

“Just don't overcharge me too much.”

“It'll depend on how you act from now on.”

While they were speaking, the two of them arrived at a hill that was about 2km away from the town.

There was a being standing there with the moonlight shining down behind his back.

His opponent spoke.

<Azell Zestringer?>

The voice that asked the question was very bleak. One got goosebumps just from listening to it, and the voice invoked a instinctive fear within oneself. The sound wasn't formed by the vibrations of a living being's vocal cords. It was evidence that this undead being was using Black Magic to produce sound.

Azell queried.

“Before you ask the other person for his identity, shouldn't you should reveal your own first?”

<It seems you are him. I'm Zeta. That is all you need to know. If you want to know more....>

Puh-luhk!

The Undead being billowed his cape that had been covering his body. Beneath the moonlight, a Skeleton Knight encased in a dark metal with an ominous red-black line running down the armor appeared. Two strong light was shining within the helm where the eyes should be.

<Acquire your qualification by surviving against my sword.>

“You are only an Undead yet you are blathering about such nonsense. Bring it on.”

# Chapter 65 - Those Who Follow The Prophecy (4)

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Azell deployed his magic. His three Rings of Life, which had gone through Dual Banding, vibrated, and an enormous amount of magic was emitted.

Woooooooooo!

‘I’ll hit him with everything I got from the beginning!’

He put on a strong front, but Azell’s instinct was warning him of danger. The Undead in front of his eyes was dangerous. A bizarre armor covered its entire body, and the sword was a powerful magical artifact. Moreover, the soul controlling these items were quite formidable.

At that moment, another Undead’s voice rang out from the dark. There were two more of them.

“Is this... Are you giving me an order?”

Kairen bared his teeth as he laughed.

The two Undead within the darkness looked to be a Magician, and an Undead Swordsman wearing similar armor to Zeta. The Undead Swordsman’s face was covered with a dark mask. The helm had two horn that looked like the horns of the Dragon

Demon race, and it looked fierce.

<Don't think of it as an order. It would be great if you thought of it as a request from a fellow member from the same organization.>

“What if I don't agree to it?”

“Doesn't that sound more fun? I don't care if we are in the organization called Guardian's Shadow. I'm not tolerant enough to be ordered around by Undead bastards.”

Hooooooooo!

Kairen unsheathed his dual swords, and he deployed his Dragon Demon magic. The air around him responded to his intent, and the sound was loud and resonant. The Undead magician, who saw this, spoke.

<Well, when I was alive, these kinds of things happened quite often. This is the temperament of a swordsman.>

The Undead Swordsman spoke with laughter in his voice. It sounded as if wind was escaping through the holes in his Skull. It seemed the Undead tried to laugh like he used to when he was alive.

The Undead Swordsman spoke.



“Kids these days? Are you old enough to speak so insolently in front of me?”

“Then you are old enough to be senile. Why don’t you leave behind your disgusting obsession and return to your grave!”

Kairen ran in like a ray of light, and he clashed with the Undead Swordsman.

Kwahhhhhhng!

Light exploded and the earth shook.

Kairen was taken aback.

‘What’s the identity of this bastard?’

His first strike was a surprise attack where he put his full power into the strike. If it was a human, any defense would have been meaningless. It would have evaporated in an instant.

However, his opponent didn’t move an inch, and it blocked his attack. It stood atop the shaking earth, and it let out an overwhelming amount of magic. Kairen had exterminated a lot of Undead before, but the amount of magic emitted by this one was on a different level.

‘It is almost on par with me in terms of magic.’

Amongst the Dragon Demon race in Rulain Kingdom, Kairen was the strongest. Surprisingly, the Undead Swordsman in front of his eyes was emitting Dragon Demon Magic that was on par with Kairen.

The Undead Swordsman spoke.

<Don't interfere, Theta.>

The sound of wind flowing out came from inside the Undead Swordsman's mask. The Undead Swordsman named Delta probably had the habit of snorting. It sounded like it.

<It's my turn, pup.>

"I haven't heard someone call me that in such a long time that it doesn't seem like you are alluding to me, old man bones."

Delta stomped on the ground as he dashed forward. Then the sword covered in darkness clashed with Kairen's dual swords.

## 6

Currently, the sounds of explosion rang out in the surrounding, and the air was getting much hotter. Azell and Zeta glared at each other as they circled around each other. However, it wasn't as if they were standing around doing nothing. At that moment, a

fierce battle was occurring in a domain that couldn't be seen by the eyes.

‘This bastard is only an Undead, but he is quite extraordinary.’

Azell felt a sense of confusion.

At that moment, they were controlling their mental waves, and they were engaged in a high speed battle.

They emphasized certain parts of their body to attract the gaze of each other, and both of them tried to hide their attack stance. However, their sense of distance became messed up as they kept following the movement of each other's stances. Both of them shifted their balance, and they kept changing the rhythm of their breathing. They were trying to mess up each other's timing.

This wasn't being done only by what one could see and hear. They used magical energy to directly limit the opponent's senses. Zeta was already dead, so he didn't have the senses that would be present in a living being. This was why Zeta used a very sophisticated technique to face Azell. His skills were not inferior to high level Spirit Order practitioners.

‘It's probably tough for a dead bastard to do this.’

A Magician loses a lot of capability when one becomes an Undead. However, a Spirit Order Practitioner had more to lose as an Undead.

At first, one would think an Undead would have no problem as a Spirit Order practitioner, since the technique dealt with the mind. However, Spirit Order practitioners controlled their mind with the Rings of Life as their anchor. This could only happen with a living body.

When one became an Undead, one lost all the standard techniques one cultivated previously. Everything had to be relearned as one had to match the standards of an Undead. How could such a thing be easy?

Che-ehng!

At some point, Azell and Zeta determined each other's timing was off, so they charged. However, the two only reaffirmed that they were both wrong.

“So the Dragon Demon worshippers were really behind the Spirit Order Practitioners of this era being so deficient in handling their mind?”

Zeta reacted in a sensitive manner. Azell knew he made a mistake, but he didn't let that show outwardly.

“What do you mean by the prophesied being? Why does an Undead want to fight me without giving any explanation? I can't see you as a someone good.”

Zeta charged as if he was skipping across space. As a living human, it was hard to predict its movements. The Undead didn't breathe, and one couldn't read the Undead's muscle, since it wasn't there. There were much less clues one could use to predict its movement compared to a human.

Kwah-chahng!

Sparks flew.

It appeared behind Azell, not in the front. It used an illusion to appear as it was jumping from the front, but it had curved the trajectory of the Instantaneous Movement to slide around to the back.

<...you are surprising. How are you able to predict an Undead's Spirit Order moves?>

Zeta rubbed at the chest region of his armor. Azell's sword had left a scratch on its surface. Azell had seen through Zeta's movement, and he had counter-attacked.

Azell snorted.

"This isn't something special. You made your Qi too obvious in the early stages. Anyways, that armor is very sturdy."

Azell had struck with the intention of slicing through the entire armor. However, the armor was so hard that he could only scratch

it.

‘It seems it’ll be quite difficult for me to harm him.’

His opponent was on a whole different level as the Undead Dragon Demon King worshiper named Jackal, who he had faced before. The armor itself was a powerful magical artifact.

Azell felt unease wash over him. Cold sweat was running down Azell’s back.

Zeta ran forward. It wasn’t Instantaneous movement, but the attack was so fast that it looked as if Zeta had jumped across space.

Cheng!

Light and darkness intersected. Azell’s eyes had narrowed from surprise, yet the exchange continued before he could blink his eyes.

Che che che che cheng!

The arc of light and the arc of darkness clashed with each other in a dizzying manner. Azell’s expression crumpled.

‘Shit! Why is this bastard so fast?’

Zeta's speed kept increasing. Azell was keeping up with his speed, so Zeta kept increasing his speed as if it was telling Azell to keep up with it. The speed increased more and more as if there was no limit.

Pee-peet!

The shoulder region of Azell's leather armor was sliced.

Peet!

Blood flew from Azell's arm.

'Fuck!'

It was too fast for Azell to keep up. He purposefully opened up a weak point, so he could try to counter attack. However, it was useless since Zeta was too fast.

His eyes followed its movement. Azell had accelerated his senses to the extreme, and he was able to process all the information he was taking in.

However, his body couldn't keep up. He used the least amount of movement to block, and he used Zeta's previous movements to predict the next moves. He was defending against it, yet there was a limit to what he could do.

Zeta was so overwhelmingly fast and strong that he couldn't cover up his deficiencies with his techniques!

Kah-kahk!

His balance was broken. Azell had been stepping to the side in a circle to resist the onslaught, but he had just taken a step backwards. Then he kept being pushed back as the dam had been broken.

The Undead didn't need to breathe. While they still had magical energy, the Undead could attack endlessly without rest. It didn't breathe, so it didn't have the weakness of slowing down from muscle fatigue.

Also, a high level Undead like Zeta had the cursed power of being able to steal energy from whatever its power of darkness touched. Azell was consuming his magical energy to defend against this.

He couldn't use his mind to create an opening. Zeta was way behind in terms of techniques dealing with the Mind, but Zeta was good enough. The difference in magical energy was used to overwhelm Azell. Moreover, the physical fight was so intense that he didn't have the time to use any advanced mental attacks.

Pah pah pah pah pah!

As if Zeta was far from done, he kept increasing his speed.



Zeta's strength was several times more stronger than Azell. Zeta's speed was several times faster than Azell. Moreover, Zeta's magical reservoir was so vast that it couldn't be compared to Azell's magical energy.

There was too big of a difference between Zeta's full strength and Azell's full strength. The fact that Azell hadn't been crushed in an instant was the evidence showing Azell was much superior in terms of techniques.

Suddenly, Azell's Clone appeared. Zeta didn't pay any attention to it. Since he already homed in on Azell's true body, any act of trying to distract him was a waste of magical energy.

However, Zeta had been too arrogant.

Too-hahk!

'What?!'

Azell suddenly appeared from his side, and Zeta was hit with a single strike. Zeta, who had been charging like a hurricane, was sent flying sideways.

Then.....

Ggwah-roo-roong! Gwah-gwahng!

Azell used this opportunity to to strike Zeta as he generated thunder with his sword.

“Huhk, huhk, huh-uhk.....!”

Azell mindlessly took in his breaths. Since he had moved without regulating his breathing, he had almost reached his limit. His heart was pounding uncontrollably, and he felt dizzy in his head.

# Chapter 66 - Those Who Follow The Prophecy (5)

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<I'm absolutely flabbergasted. What technique did you use? I believe you used the extension of the Astral Projection technique. Is it really possible to use it in this manner?>

Zeta walked out of the cloud of dust unharmed. Azell didn't answer him as he tried to regulate his breathing.

Astral Projection.

This was a highly difficult training method used by a Spirit Order Practitioner, when one is in the process of training one's mind.

The mind and the body was completely separated from each other. The body moved in such a state. Moreover, one had to imitate and conceptualize the various organs of the body. This was how one could still keep the sensation of being alive, while one was separated from one's body.

This process was so hard that not many Spirit Order practitioners succeeded in achieving this state.

Zeta was an Undead, yet he was able to use his Spirit Order. Zeta was also using an variation of this technique to achieve this result.

This was also true for Azell's cloning technique 'Dance of the

Shadow', which gave his clones substance.

It was possible to imitate the sensation of being alive through the astral body. However, what Azell was doing was on a whole different level. The clones that had been completely separated from the body was able to physically influence the material world.

Zeta had been a high level Spirit Order Practitioner in his previous life, and he had maintained his level of skill. However, the technique shown by Azell was inexplicable to him.

<If you won't answer me, then I'll have to find out the answer. However, there is something that doesn't make any sense. You have all these techniques, yet.....>

Azell didn't give Zeta the chance to finish his words. When he determined his breathing was under control, Azell used the Instantaneous Movement to rush forward.

Four of Azell's clone appeared near Zeta.

Kwahng!

Accompanying the sound of an explosion, Zeta was sent flying. Each of them possessed detailed and clear presence that one couldn't tell which one was the real body. This was why Zeta chose to pierce three of them at the same time. He pierced one with his sword, and the other two with his Darkness magic.

However, the last remaining one had hit Zeta's body. Then the one that Zeta had thought he had defeated pierced through his Darkness Magic. The one he considered to be a clone struck out at Zeta.

‘I have to decide the victory right now!’

At that moment, Azell's heart started beating crazily as it poured out the magical energy.

Even when he was mindlessly panting, he hadn't let even a second go to waste. The fact that his heart was racing meant he was vibrating his Rings of Life. When one's body craved oxygen, the painful moment could be used to extract a vast amount of magical energy. Currently, he was swirling with magical energy that was much higher in quantity than his body could contain.

‘Star's Breath!’

He created a white hot flame to eradicate the Undead. The flame followed the trajectory of his sword, and it exploded when it reached its target.

Hahhhhhhhhk!

The storm of white flame lashed out. Azell had accelerated his sword past his limit. He pierced through Zeta's defense, and his sword energy showered down at Zeta.

Too-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo!

No matter how sturdy this bizarre armor was, there had to be a breaking point. If he could use his entire strength to break it....

<How unfortunate.>

...Zeta had been taking a beat, yet a genuine sound of regret was heard in his voice.

Hoooooooooooohng!

A blood-colored darkness exploded forth with Zeta at its center.

Azell's white fire was swept away in an instant. It was like a candle being snuffed out by a storm.

For a moment, Azell's movement stalled, and Zeta didn't miss taking advantage of this moment.

<How can you possess such wondrous skills, yet.... How do you not have any power?>

Zeta's sword flew towards Azell. The Curse of Darkness had dug into his mind. He had stiffened as he tried to resist against the Curse of Darkness that had dug into his mind. It caused Azell to be a step slow.

This small pause proved to be fatal.

Azell hadn't taken a direct hit from Zeta's sword energy until now. There was too much of a difference in physical strength, and Zeta's sword was a Demonic Sword with powerful magic dwelling within it. Azell had received the attacks obliquely as he let the attacks slide off of his sword. This had protected his sword. However, he wasn't able to do so this time.

Kahng!

Azell's sword broke into pieces. Before Azell could do anything, Zeta hit Azell's body.

Kwahng!

Accompanying the sound of explosion, Azell was sent flying.

'Fuck.....!'

Azell's body hit the ground, and his body took a high bounce. His body lodged into a tree.

If he was a normal person, he would have died immediately from the impact. However, Azell had used Spirit Order in an instant to reduce the shock. It saved his life.

'No.....'

Azell forcefully grabbed onto his fading consciousness.

The situation he had been worried about had come true. If Azell and Kairen fought at full strength with the intent to kill each other, the result would be something similar to now.

However, he was fighting against Zeta, not Kairen. Still, his prediction had been on point.

If one was an expert, one could deflect strong attacks through techniques. However, techniques wouldn't be able to hold back a flood.

He was short on power.

If a three year old child developed the greatest technique in the world, the child wouldn't be able to beat a trained adult, who was fully armed. This was how vast the gulf was between Azell and Zeta.

“What do you think?”

Azell was trying his damndest to stand up when he heard the voice of a youth. It was Leone, who had been observing the situation.

<I have no idea.>



“...so what the hell was the point of all of this? We just bought unwanted enmity with this.”

<However, he is worth watching a little bit more.>

“Hmmm. Is that so? Maybe, someone else should test him right now.”

<We should give him more time.>

“Well, he does need time to recover from his wounds.....”

<No, we have to give him more time than that. Only then will he find out about his true worth.>

“Do you have any evidence to supports this opinion?”

<No. However, my feeling is telling me it is so.>

“Hmmm.....”

<Even if someone else conducts another test right now, it would be difficult for us to get our confirmation.>

“Well, you are the one, who tested him. Since that is your opinion, we will do as you say.”

<Let's retreat for now. We've been out for too long.>

“Wait, you dirty bag of bones.....”

Azell glared at Zeta as he panted. Zeta returned his gaze.

<I'll give you a chance to avenge yourself next time. You should rest right now, test taker. You will have plenty of opportunities if you stay alive.>

The darkness emitted by Zeta swallowed Azell.

‘Ah. Annoying... Bastard.....’

As this thought ran across Azell's mind, he lost consciousness.

## 7

Azell's consciousness travelled to a time long before. He returned to a time when he had still been young and inexperienced.

‘It's a dream.’

Azell knew this to be true. He hadn't meant for this to happen, but his sense of desire before he fell unconscious had guided him to

this point.

“What is needed for the humans to win against the Dragon Demon race?”

A middle-aged man, who possessed a large body, asked the question. Azell was a tall man, but the other man was a head taller than Azell. Moreover, the man possessed brown skin color, and a black beard. From Azell's perspective, the man had an exotic appearance.

He was Azell's 3rd teacher, Liglan.

He was a dual-swordsman, who used two curved sword. He was a frightening high rank Spirit Order practitioner, who was greater than anyone Azell had known at the time. He was royalty from a desert kingdom. After his kingdom was exterminated by the Dragon Demon army, he became well known in the Nadick Empire for his bravery.

At the time, Azell had been an unaffiliated knight, and he had decided to fight alongside Liglan. Azell had been awed by his courage and righteousness. Liglan carried himself like royalty as he possessed boldness and dignity. He was a brave general, who struck fear into the Dragon Demon army.

Moreover, Liglan considered Azell to be the one to bring hope to this era of Darkness. This was why he had taken in the unaffiliated knight, who had wandering from place to place. Liglan taught Azell techniques that hadn't been taught to him by his previous

masters.

Azell spoke.

“I guess one needs the Dragon Demon Qi.”

The Dragon Magic Qi was the ultimate weapon. It was made using one's soul as ingredient and it required the use of refined power of a Dragon.

This was a miraculous tool that was available to the Spirit Order Practitioners, who were standing at the zenith of their ability. It was rare to find someone, who possessed this miraculous tool. Moreover, each of these men held enough power to be able to contend against the strong players of the Dragon Demon Army.

Liglan was one of them. Up until now, he had fought eight Dragons to the death, and the result of his victories was the Dragon Maken in the form of two swords that made up a pair.

Liglan shook his head from side to side.

“No.”

“Then what is it?”

“The answer is more simple than that. It's power.”

The Dragon Demon Race was born with a powerful body at birth in comparison to humans. Even a frail looking woman possessed enormous strength to be able to rip a wild beast in half with her bare hands.

Moreover, those from the Dragon Demon race was lightning fast even if they hadn't cultivated. If they decided to kill a normal person, one wouldn't even be able to see their movements.

The Dragon Demon race had extreme perception that allowed them to control their abilities. They also possessed special magic called the Dragon Demon Magic, which exceeded the magic of a high rank human magician.

Even if a being from the Dragon Demon race never learned any battle techniques, one of them had the power to take on a hundred humans.

“Yet those beings cultivate their own martial arts called the Dragon Ridge Arts, and they research about magic. Humans are like practice targets they could kill at their whim.”

Techniques were insufficient in being able to contend against them. One needed power.

Who cares if one could hit them if they were unharmed afterwards?

What was the point in being able to block their attacks if one's

entire defense would be blown into pieces?

“If you want to go toe to toe with them, you have to move past the so-called limits of a normal human. That’s the minimum requirement. You have to become as strong as a monster, and fast as a lightning. Then you will be able to stand at the starting line.”

“Is there an alternative answer to the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual?”

If one was victorious in the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, one could strengthen one’s body through the Dragon’s power. It was the magical key that freed one from the limit one reached through cultivation.

Liglan had performed the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual eight times, and he had moved past the limitations of a human. However, that wasn’t the entire story. Didn’t it mean one had to already have enough power to be able to fight and kill a Dragon in the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual? If one already had the power to kill a Dragon, one already had the power to contend against the Dragon Demon Race.

Liglan spoke.

“Azell. Your teachers were very outstanding. I can tell just by looking at you. I wish Balf was still alive. I would have liked to meet him. He taught you about the Extreme Senses. However, he probably wasn’t able to pass on everything he wanted before he died. It is now my responsibility to fill in that gap.”

Balf's mad teachings allowed Azell to possess superhuman senses that was superior to most Spirit Order Practitioners. However, a young man like him wasn't able to overcome a high level Spirit Order Practitioner with just his potential in hand. The techniques were too strong and profound.

"You've done well in learning ways to strengthen your mind. I have nothing to teach you regarding that topic. I can only give you some knacks to help you. However, I can teach you a lot about strengthening your body. The problem is this can't be achieved in an instant. If you want a powerful body, you have invest enough time into it."

"You are basically saying I have to stay alive for me to achieve this."

"Yes."

Bbooooooooooooo—!

A horn rang out far in the distance.

It was a signal that alerted everyone that the enemies were coming. The soldiers within the fortress moved busily as they got ready to face the Dragon Demon army.

Liglan climbed the stairs to the castle walls as he spoke.

"We don't have the luxury of isolating ourselves to grow our

power like the cultivators of old. However, I don't want you to kill hundred to thousands of people to grow your power."

"I never wanted to do such a thing."

"Please stay alive until you are able to learn everything I have to teach you. As your teacher, this is the only promise I want from you. Can you give me that promise?"

"Well, of course, I'll do that."

Azell laughed.

However, the promise hadn't been kept. It was Liglan, not Azell, who had broken the promise.



# Chapter 67 - Dragon Demon Weapon Producers (1)

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1

When he opened his eyes, Azell realized he was crying. The rims of his eyes was wet, and tears flowed across his cheeks to land on the pillow.

“You are awake?”

He heard Kairen’s voice. He raised his hand to wipe away his tears, but Azell flinched.

“Oohk.”

“Don’t be rash in moving. I’ve been told your ribs and arm bones are broken.”

“Ah. I’m in such a state from a single blow... It makes me resent my feeble body again.”

“The healer had a differing opinion. Your internal organs hadn’t ruptured. He was surprised at how sturdy you were.”

Kairen spoke in an apathetic manner. Azell turned his head to look at Kairen, and he couldn’t hold back his laughter.

“Duke. Your eyes....”

“Ughh.”

Kairen’s eye were swollen blue. Kairen spoke as he covered his eye with his hand.

“That corpse bastard was quite formidable. I’ve never seen an Undead from the Dragon Demon race.”

“He was of the Dragon Demon race?”

“I confirmed it when I broke his helm. I had split his head open, and for a brief moment, I let my guard down....”

His sword had sliced through the Undead’s skull, and his sword had lodged in its body. Kairen thought he would have some respite, but Delta had punched Kairen in such a state. This made his eye swell up. Kairen had never suffered such humiliation.

After letting out a laugh, Azell was racked with pain.

“Ooh-goo-goohk. I can’t even laugh like I want to.”

“That’s what you get for daring to laugh at my expense.”

“How long was I out?”

“You were out a little bit longer than your normal sleeping time. The healer found it very interesting that your body was in a mess yet your condition was very stable.”

“I’m used to maintaining my body, while I’m hurt. The habit is engraved in my bones.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

During the Dragon Demon war, he had frequently escaped from the throes of death. When he received a wound, he used a technique to minimize the effect of the wound. His harsh experiences allowed him to reach the zenith of this technique. It was nothing for him to maintain his body even when he was unconscious.

Kairen spoke.

“You are no worse for wear.”

“My body is a mess. What are you talking about...”

“I meant your state of mind. You were crying in your sleep. I thought you were crying so much, because you were enraged by your loss....”

“...when you see a man’s tears, it is courteous to act like you never saw it.”

“Is there really such a courtesy? Somehow, my mouth feel itchy, and I feel like telling Arrieta about this next time I see her....”

“.....”

“Well, all right. Anyways, how are you doing?”

“I’m not doing so great. My inside is boiling.”

“I thought you were a daredevil, who wasn’t afraid of anything in this world, because you’ve never experienced any loss. I’m a little bit surprised that this wasn’t true.”

Azell had passed through death’s door after experiencing a sudden defeat. However, he hadn’t been consumed by the shock. For those with incredible potential, they put a lot of faith into their power. This means the shock of defeat is that much larger when they lose..

Azell spoke.

“I’ve never had the luxury of doing that. When one fights, one could lose, get hurt or die. The important part for me is to stay alive. Then I can use my sword for revenge next time.”

“Sometimes you say things I really like. That’s a problem.”

Kairen stood up. Azell asked a question.

“What happened to them?”

“When you fell, they ended the fight then they retreated. The annoying kid went with them.”

“I see.”

“They said they’ll be back. I don’t know when....”

Kairen spoke as he was about to exit the room.

“I’ll ask them to bring your meals here. We’ll be staying here for four more days. Don’t think about moving and just rest.”

“Your schedule is going to be delayed, because of me. I apologize.”

“Stop it. The doctor recommended that timeframe. Also, you were beaten by an organization I am affiliated with. I’ll be very embarrassed if you apologise to me. Anyways, I left the capital, because it was too much work there. It isn’t as if I’m in a hurry, so don’t worry about it. Rest.”

Kairen exited, and Azell was alone. For a brief moment, he blankly stared at the empty air, and he had a thought.

‘Should I trust those bastards?’

There were too many suspicious aspect to their story to just blindly trust the Guardian Shadows. He had no idea what the ghost-like member of the Guardian Shadow was, but Undeads could only be born through the use of evil black magic.....

‘First, I have to break that test or whatever they were suggesting. Then I’ll be able to get some more information.’

Unfortunately, he was a weakling right now. He couldn’t catch the Dragon Shadows and extract the truth out of them. He had no choice, but to be pulled by their machination...

It had been a long time since he felt this feeling of powerlessness. Azell showed a face he kept hidden from Kairen. His face crumpled, and he grinded his teeth.

## 2

Azell was still weak after four days. Even if they spent a lot of money on a healer, there was limit on how much a human body could heal. There was a limit to one’s recuperative powers.

Still, it wasn’t as if Azell couldn’t move. This was why the two of

them went back on the road.

Kairen asked him a question.

“Are you really ok?”

“Well, my bones have somewhat mended. If I don’t over do it, I’ll be fine.”

“We’ll travel 30 kilometres per day.”

“Are you trying to kill me?”

“Then how about 20 kilometres?”

“Let’s try it first.”

Azell grumbled as he traveled across a mountain, lake, and the plains. Azell was able to power through 30 kilometres of travel in a single day.

After a week, he had made a full recovery even though his body was being abused daily.

They were finally able to enter into the Dukedom of Tarantos.

However, the Dukedom of Tarantos was so large that it took

them two days to arrive at the castle.

Even though, he was a lord that ruled over such a large domain, Kairen refused to reveal his identity. Everyone knew he was of the Dragon Demon Race, so he had disguised himself as a human. This was why no one recognized him.

Their incognito traveling lasted until they reached the Tarantos castle. When the two of them were in the immediate vicinity of the Tarantos Castle, Kairen asked a question.

“What do you think?”

“It’s wonderful.”

Azell had expressed his honest opinion.

The Tarantos castle was surrounded by a wonderful city. This place was the heart of the Tarantos Dukedom. The castle couldn’t be compared in terms of grandness to the other lord’s castles Azell had seen on his travel here. With the ancient castle at the center, the city was very well landscaped. Moreover, a large wall surrounded the city.

Kairen spoke.

“My parents were very artistic. I didn’t inherit that particular trait.”



“You are quite honest.”

“I’ve lived a long time, but I don’t have any profound knowledge about the arts. The people of my domain should be thankful that I hadn’t been burdened with making this city.”

“I have no opinions on Duke’s artistic sense. However, I’ll admit your ancestors had excellent artistic sense.”

“You always add in an insolent phrase.”

Kairen took off his disguise before he entered the Tarantos castle.

“The Duke is back!”

The guards yelled out in surprise when they saw him. The news spread quickly, and there were commotions in various parts of the castle. Kairen asked the guard to bring two horses, and they got on the horses.

Azell asked a question.

“I thought you said running is faster than riding.”

“I have to put up a front of dignity in front of the my people. If I don’t, they’ll nag me about it. The people below me always tell me what to do. Sometimes I wonder who is really in charge.”

Azell watched the streets as he rode on his horse. The people lining up on the streets let out a fervent cheer when they saw Kairen.

“It’s the Duke!”

“Look over there! The Duke is here!”

Kairen waved their hands towards them. The women looked like they were about to faint from the pleasure of being waved at. Azell spoke.

“Your popularity is almost as high as the princess.”

“I’ve done well in my role as a lord. Do you admire me a little bit more now?”

“I’m just surprised the residents of your domain aren’t reserved around you.”

When the lord’s authority becomes stronger, it manifests itself on the attitudes of the residents. When the lord’s party passes by, wasn’t it normal for residents to lower their head in silence?

However, they weren’t showing any signs of acting that way. They just showed their love for Kairen.

“I hate being stuffy. I’m of the Dragon Demon race, and I really won’t be popular if I acted that way.”

“Ah.”

The human society was united now, but the scar leftover from the Dragon Demon war was still present. Those of the Dragon Demon race still had to be cautious on how they treated humans. This was the reason why the Dragon Demon Princess and Dragon Demon Prince still existed.

Even if he was called the living legend, Kairen was also one of the Dragon Demon race. Moreover, he was in a position where he had to rule over humans as their lord. This was why he didn’t like coming out to official events. He was well aware of his situation as a lord belonging to the Dragon Demon race.

Azell suddenly asked a question.

“Do you like humans, Duke?”

“It’s a question with a set answer.”

“Well, you can tell me a little bit of your true feelings to me.”

“I’ll do so if you answer my questions truthfully.”

“You are being cheap trying to make such a deal.”

“You don’t like it?”

“No. I’ll agree to it.”

“All right. I like humans, sir Azell. I was born in a noble family affiliated to a human country. I’ve never hated the responsibility of a lord. Is that a satisfactory answer?”

“It’s enough.”

Kairen’s answer made Azell think about his old comrades. During the Dragon Demon war, his comrades had opposed the will of the Dragon Demon King, who wanted to dominate the humans. They received gazes filled with hatred and mistrust. From humans They were pitiable existence, who put their lives on the line for their love of humans. His comrades had wanted to save the humans.

Azell suddenly asked a question.

“There is something I am curious about, Duke.”

“What is it? I think it’s my turn to ask you a question. Why are you being like this?”

“Amongst the Dragon Demon race in this country...”

At that moment, Azell stopped speaking. Azell was so surprised

that he didn't even feel Kairen staring at him with a quizzical glance.

‘Rogan?’

Servants were lined up in front of the entrance to the Tarantos castle. At the center, a Dragon Majin in a butler's garb was standing there. Normally, people would be surprised at the fact that a Dragon Majin was being employed as a butler. However, Azell's brain wasn't even thinking such thoughts.

‘He's still alive?’

His face looked like someone Azell had known.

Kairen asked a question.

“What's wrong?”

“That person.....”

“Mmmm? Who?”

“Ro... Ah. Nothing.”

Azell suddenly came to his senses.

When they arrived a bit closer, his memory and the present overlapped, and he started seeing discrepancies. The Dragon Majin butler looked surprisingly like Rogan, but it wasn't him.

‘He’s a Dragon Majin.’

Rogan was of the Dragon Demon race. He wasn't a Dragon Majin.

Still, he looked surprisingly like Rogan. Even his age range looked to be around what Azell remembered. This Dragon Majin was in his late 30 or early 40s.

His skin color was a bit dusky. His eyes were blue like the clear autumn sky, and his hair color was a faded blonde. His ears were slightly pointed, and he had small gray horns curving atop his ears. It looked like a ram's horn. On the back of his hand, there was a somewhat murky blue colored Dragon Demon stone.

Azell was acting strange, so Kairen spoke.

“Hmmm. Are you surprised by Havanz? I guess I can understand why, since he is acting as a butler when he is a Dragon Majin.”

“I guess such a thing can happen.”

Azell replied as he couldn't tear his gaze away from Havanz. They weren't the same person, but they were almost identical.

Rogan.

He was from the Dragon Demon race, and he had fought alongside Azell in the Dragon Demon war. He had fallen in love with a human woman, and they had produced a young child. Azell remembered Rogan bashfully showed a portrait of his wife and child. Azell considered him to be more human rather than a being from the Dragon Demon race.

Azell spoke with far away look in his eyes.

“I remember it now.”

“What do you mean?”

“I thought he looked very similar to someone. In the beginning, I thought he was someone I knew, but I was mistaken. Do you perhaps know Rogan of the Dragon Demon race? He had an active role in the Dragon Demon war....”

“Sir Rogan was Havanz’ grandfather.”

“I see. He looks exactly like the portrait I saw.”

“Ah-ha. Is that why you were so surprised?”

“The memory suddenly popped into my mind.”

Azell tried very hard to give the impression that everything was fine.

The existence of Havanz, who made him think about the past, gave him a huge shock. He had accepted the fact that he had been thrown into this era on his own, and he was trying to live with this fact. However, he couldn't erase the loneliness he felt.



## Chapter 68 - Dragon Weapon Producers (2)

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Azell asked a question.

“I’m having a hard time remembering the content of the book I read... Do you perhaps know what happened to Rogan?”

“He passed away. It happened before I was born.”

“.....”

Even for the Dragon Demon race, 220 years was a long time. They lived much longer than a human, but their lifespan was between 300 to 500 years.

“I see.....”

Azell put on a bitter smile at the answer. His foolish anticipation had made his heart pound, and he found it to be ridiculous.

At that moment, Havanz spoke.

“You are late, Duke. We were worried about you.”

“I ran into an accident in the middle of the trip.”

“It would have been great if you could have sent word ahead.”

“I wasn’t in the right frame of mind. Moreover, I’m late, because my friend here is weaker than I had anticipated.”

“You are using a guest as an excuse. That is beyond lame. It is very rare for you to bring a guest. I am the one in charge of managing the household of Duke Tarantos. I am the butler, Havanz. I welcome you to the Tarantos castle.”

“My name is Azell Zestringer. I’m a knight. It is a pleasure to meet you.”

Azell’s voice shook slightly. Havanz’s voice also reminded him of Rogan.

Havanz spoke.

“You possess the same name as the legendary hero. It seems your parents were very well versed in history. They named you as a Zestringer.”

“Do you know about that name?”

“I know it quite well. My grandfather had fought alongside the hero Azell Karzark.”

Havanz put on a smile. Azell looked at Havanz with a complicated expression when Kairen spoke.

“Let’s head in first. Please ready a room for our friend, Havanz. Please show him that the Dukedom of Tarantos isn’t lacking compared to the capital.”

“If I infer from your words, it seems he was a guest of the throne. Understood. Also, we’ve stocked your office. We readied it for your return.”

“Mmm. Did you put a lot of effort into it?”

“You can probably look forward to it.”

“I don’t know why my steward is so insolent.”

“It is thanks to the Duke relaxing the family customs. Now, now. Many people are waiting for the Duke.”

“Those are unwelcoming news.”

Azell couldn’t suppress his laughter when he caught sight of Kairen’s expression. He looked like a child, who didn’t want to do his homework.

However, his expression changed at Havanz’s next words.

“Count Michael is here.”

“That old fart is already here?”

“You are of the same age as him. He’ll feel very disappointed if you spoke that way.”

“I’m still young, so it’s ok.”

Kairen snorted.

### 3

Azell was able to meet Kairen once again at dinner time. A servant appeared to deliver the dinner invitation, and Azell followed the servant to the dining room.

Kairen wasn’t waiting alone in the dining room. After waking up in this era, this magician was the oldest Dragon Majin he had encountered.

Kairen spoke.

“Sit. Today’s dinner is something the chef wanted to boast for a fortnight, so you can look forward to it.”

“I look forward to it.”

“This is Count Beorein Michael. He is a foul-tempered old man. He also likes to be called Rulain Kingdom’s Eastern Guardian. However, you don’t have to remember the latter part, since it is all empty reputation. It’ll become tiresome if you humor him.”

“I admit my temper isn’t that great, but there is no way my temper is bad as yours, Kairen.”

Beorein let out a snort. He looked at Azell as he spoke.

“Young friend. This is the first time I’ve met you, but I can already tell we will get along very well.”

“My name is Azell Zestringer. I am a knight. It is an honor for a high ranked magician to speak to me like this. If you don’t mind me asking, what basis do you have that we will get along?”

“I heard you gave the inner old geezer a good fight? I’m glad you punched that old geezer, who is always on his high horse. That’s the only reason I need to like you.”

“The inner old geezer is.....”

Azell was able to suppress his laughter through great effort when he heard the expression. Kairen countered with his words.

“Isn’t it better than looking old on the outside? If you aged gracefully, you won’t hear such words from me.”

“This is why I like this friend, who got one over you. I’m like this, because you speak like that. Also, the fact that he gave a bitter taste to Niberis of the Dragon Demon race is a bonus in his favor.”

“You know her?”

“I’m also part of the Guardian Shadow. Do I need to explain more?”

Beorein Michael was a powerful magician, and he was a person of interest to those in the Field of Darkness. He was known as the best magician in the Rulain Kingdom, and he had the title of Archmage.

Beorein spoke.

“I chased after them before they exited our country. Unfortunately, I lost them. I was able to kill two underlings... Their runaway skill were exquisite.”

“Maybe your skills were lacking?”

Kairen spoke in a sarcastic manner. Beorein furrowed his eyebrows.

“Why do you always have to talk like that? Also, didn’t you fail to catch them, when you had them in your sight?”

“My aim was to save Arrieta. My goal wasn’t to catch them.”

“Well, the excuse is no surprise, coming from you.”

Beorein clicked his tongue.

Kairen spoke.

“This conversation is making me lose my appetite. Let’s talk after the dinner. How’s our hospitality?”

“It is on par with what I experienced at the royal palace.”

Azell’s compliment was the truth. The Tarantos castle had treated him incredibly well. The guest room that was given to him was nice, and the servants were incredibly meticulous in their work.

Kairen was satisfied with the answer.

“You’ll soon find out about our chef’s skill.”

His words were true. The Tarantos Castle’s chef brought out his secret new item for the main course. Azell felt very happy as he ate his meal.

After the dinner, the three of them retired to Kairen's office.

Beorein asked a question.

“Are you really going to make a Dragon Weapon for that young friend?”

“I meant what I said.”

“Well, the ingredients are all prepared, so we can do it... This is the first time I've seen you show favoritism to someone.”

“It isn't as if I want to show favoritism to him. He isn't one of my people, but I lost a bet with him. I have no choice.”

“You are making him a Dragon Weapon just from losing some sparring matches. If this fact was spread, swordsmen from all over the country would come here to find you with their torches lit.”

Beorein was talking about the Dragon Sword Kairen used when he spoke about the Dragon Weapon.

He was one of figures, who had come up with the method of producing the Dragon Sword with Kairen. Moreover, he also had a Dragon Weapon of his own.

Azell had asked for a favor that was equivalent to all the matches



he had won against Kairen.

Azell wanted Kairen to make him a Dragon Sword.

This was related to the request he had given to Arrieta. Azell had asked Arrieta to gather all the ingredients need to make a Dragon Weapon from the Dragon's corpse located at the Balan forest. Arrieta gladly granted his request, and the ingredients listed by Kairen had arrived at the Tarantos Castle.

Kairen spoke.

“However, I think it is worth investing in him. I want to verify if what he says is true.”

“Are you talking about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual?”

“Yes.”

“Hmmm.....”

“Well, if you don't like this idea, you can always test it out yourself. A Dragon Majin can also be the beneficiary of the Ritual. If it is you, you'll be able to come out victorious against a one-on-one battle with a Dragon. It isn't as if it is impossible. If you are successful, you'll earn the power of a Dragon. Isn't that a gamble worth doing?”

“I’ll decline. I can’t believe you are suggesting me to do such a crazy thing. It seems you are itching to push me into my grave.”

Beorein was called the strongest magician of this kingdom, yet he wouldn’t fight one-on-one against a dragon based on an unreliable information. He grumbled.

“I like this guy, but why does he want to do such a crazy thing? Of course, a Spirit Order practitioner probably has a better chance of winning than a magician. This is assuming the magician and the Spirit Order practitioner are of similar quality.”

Dragons were a very bad opponent for a magician. A Dragon’s magic was something that couldn’t even be compared to what the Dragon Demon race used. A Dragon had a direct control over nature. This was why their resistance to magic was incredibly high. Even a magician like Beorein wouldn’t be able to use elemental magics like flame, cold air or thunder. It wasn’t effective at all against a Dragon. Moreover.....

Azell spoke.

“Dragons can steal spells, and it can be used against a magician.”

“Hmmm. You are very knowledgeable about Dragons.”

Beorein was surprised.

Dragons showed an extraordinary amount of intelligence when

they faced humans. The Dragons understood the language of humans. They even comprehended the techniques used against them, and they adapted to it.

The problem was the huge disadvantage a magician possessed when fighting a Dragon. When the magician used an element controlled by the Dragon, the Dragon could mimic the magician's magic. The Dragon would send back the mage's spell. This was why there was a prevalent theory amongst the magicians that Dragons had the ability to read a human's visual cue.

Azell spoke.

“It isn't too different for a Spirit Order practitioner when facing a Dragon. If one uses a technique that can be mimicked by a Dragon, Spirit Order practitioners can suffer the same fate as Magicians. This is why one has to make preparations from the beginning.”

“Preparations? What kind?”

“If we consider the theory spoken by the Duke to be true, one would have to guard one's visual cue from being read.”

When Azell fought the Earth Dragon, he had a set of rules he followed strictly. Even during the Dragon Demon war, the ecology of the Dragon had a lot of holes. However, the hypothesis of a Dragon reading a human's visual cue existed back then too.

However, Carlos had confirmed this theory. This was why when he went through the Dragon Slayer's ritual, he used several techniques that allowed him a measure of defense against the Dragon.

Beorein asked a question.

“Then one will be able to win against a Dragon if one uses such methods?”

“It isn't a guarantee. However, it is the minimum criteria one has to follow to win.”

“Mmm. I asked the wrong question. I'm talking about you... If you gain a Dragon Weapon, will you be able to win against a Dragon?”

“I can't win against a Dragon.”

Azell gave a firm answer. Beorein was taken aback, and he looked towards Kairen.

“Isn't this incongruous with what you told me earlier?”

“He isn't done talking. Why don't you just listen to what he has to say until the end? This is the problem with old farts like him. He's impatient.”

Kairen made fun of Beorein, and Beorein's face crumpled.

Azell let out a bitter laugh as he asked a question.

“Have you heard from the Duke about our travels?”

“The person called the Keeper of the prophecy, and the Undeads showed up in the guise of carrying out a test.... That's what I heard.”

“Do you have any knowledge about them?”

“I don't have much information about them. However, I've seen the Undead named Delta before. He's the one, who fought with Kairen.”

“Do you mean the Dragon Demon Undead?”

“Yes. Mmmm.....”

Beorein searched through his memories.

“It happened around 20 years ago. I was trying to catch a Dragon Demon, who had stepped out of the Field of Darkness. The Dragon Demon was very strong, and to tell you the truth, I was barely handling him.”

“The fact that you are speaking about it in such a manner means he was that strong?”

Kairen asked in surprise. Beorein nodded his head.

“First, shall I tell you about the woman named Niberis? I was in the position of advantage when I was chasing her. However, the result of a one-on-one battle with her would be a coin flip. If one considered only the Dragon Demon magic, she was almost on par with you. She performed advanced magic, but she was still very inexperienced in how she used...”

“Hmm. I’ve already heard you tell that story. I thought that woman had nothing to do with the incident 20 years ago?”

“This will be easier if you have a reference point to compare. The Dragon Demon I was chasing was much stronger than Niberis. She couldn’t hold a candle to him. If one considered his Dragon Demon Magic, he was almost on par with a Dragon. Can you comprehend what I’m trying to say?”

“What? You are surely over-exaggerating it.”

“It isn’t an exaggeration. It was as I said. He fought me, my disciples and 30 other Guardian Shadow Members. He was actually prevailing over us. At that moment, a being appeared, and it was Delta. To be precise, the Keeper of Prophecy contacted the Undeads from afar. After being contacted, three Undeads appeared. It was Beta, Gamma and Delta.”

The three Undeads had left an indelible impression on Beorein. However, even they couldn't gain an upperhand against the Dragon Demon, who was surrounded by ominous Dragon Demon magic.

“In the battle, Beta and Gamma was exterminated. Delta was the only one that survived, and he returned to the Keeper of the Prophecy. That is all I know regarding them.”

“Basically, I crushed the skull of your benefactor.”

“To make up for it, Duke's eye was...”

“Stop right there. Shut your mouth.”

“Ho-oh. It seems you left out something in your story. It sounds very interesting....”

“Don't try to find out more about it. Azell. If you say anything, then I'll talk about the time you were sleeping... You get what I'm saying?”

“Chet.”

The blackmailed Azell clicked his tongue as if it was unfortunate that he wouldn't be able to tell the story.

Beorein snickered.

“Well, I don’t know the whole story, but it seems my friend here suffered some kind of indignity. Well, all right. Even as someone inside the Guardian Shadows, I knew that the Keeper of the Prophecy and his associates were a bit on the weird side. Moreover, you are one of the candidates that they consider to be important.”

“I don’t know why. They kept referring me as the person in the prophecy, but I don’t know the content of the prophecy.”

“I do not know the content either. That is a problem.”

“If I had my way, I would shake them by their neck to get them to talk.”

“I feel the same way regarding that point. Their curtain of secrecy is a bit too strange. It’s been several dozen years for me.”

Beorein grumbled. Kairen was also unsatisfied as a member of the Guardian Shadows.

Azell spoke.

“It seems our conversation got sidetracked. Mmm. The reason I spoke about that... In the end, the reason I lost at the time is the same reason why I won’t be able to win against a Dragon. If one wants to win against a Dragon, one needs more than techniques. One needs strength.”



For a Spirit Order practitioner, one had to go through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to truly break past one's limit.

However, one had to have the power to win against a Dragon without the benefit of the Dragon Slayer's ritual. If one was at that level, one was already at a stage where one would be able to win against a Dragon Demon.

This was the dilemma faced by the high rank Spirit Order Practitioners of Azell's era. To earn the absolute power, one already had to possess what was considered to be absolute power by human standard.

"With my current strength, there is no way I can go through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. I'll most definitely die."

"Hmmm. So this won't be solved by you gaining a Dragon Weapon?"

"No."

"So what are your plans?"

"I have to focus on my training for a short amount of time. I'll continue until I reach an acceptable level."

"...that's all you need to do? It isn't that easy to gain the power you lack."

Beorein started to give council to Azell. He was a magician, but he had a lot of knowledge about the Spirit Order. He knew that the quantity of magical energy for a Spirit Order Practitioner couldn't be increased dramatically.

However, Azell was full of confidence.

“I'll prove it to you through the result. Currently, that is all I can say to assure you.”

For reference, Azell had done a lot of things after we woke up, but it had only been two months.

In such a short amount of time, Azell had made three Rings of Life. Moreover, with his own secret technique, he was able to add the Dual Banding.

Of course, this had been possible, because he went through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. Moreover, he had absorbed the Dragon Demon Qi left behind by Carlos. Still, he hadn't had the time to really train, and build up his body. His progress had been amazing considering the amount of abuse his body had suffered in battle.

It was inevitable, but anyone who had fought Azell had wondered why he had so little magic. As a Spirit Order practitioner, one's magic was proportional to one's skill. It increased in a rising curve.

When one moved up the stages of Spirit Order, it meant one's

ability to control magic had gone up. It allowed one to be able to control more magic in marvelous ways. This allowed one to strengthen one's Energy Pulse, strengthen the bowl holding one's magic and increase the number of Ring of Life.

In the past, Azell had eight Rings of Life. He had been an Octuple Master. If given enough time, he was confident he would be able to exceed his former self even without the Dragon Slayer's ritual.

Beorein spoke.

“Hmm. All right. I'll put my trust in your for now.”

This was how they decided to manufacture the Dragon Sword for Azell.

# Chapter 69 – Dragon Weapon Producers (3)

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## 5

The Dragon Sword wasn't easily manufactured. It was also something that couldn't be done with only Kairen and Michael. Kairen had to gather all the qualified individuals in his Domain, and he would have to begin his preparations.

Kairen asked a question.

“So when are you going to entertain my knights?”

“I'm interested in fighting them, but I would like to train on my own for now.”

“All right. I have a lot of work backed up, so I'll leave you unattended.”

“Unattended sounds a bit...”

“When I'm done with my work, you better play with me often.”

“Duke. If someone overhears you, they might misconstrue what you are trying to say.”

Azell spoke sarcastically.

Kairen ignored him, and he spoke.

“Anyways, I won’t be able to do anything else once I start making the Dragon Weapon. This is especially true in the beginning.”

“How long will it take to complete it?”

“It’ll take around half a year. I could do it faster, but I’m not in that much of a hurry.”

“Then I’ll finish my training within that time frame.”

“You do that. If I do drop by in the middle of your training, don’t forget to play with me.”

“I can do that at the very least.”

Azell smirked. Kairen spoke.

“If you need anything, don’t hesitate to speak up. If my budget allows it, I will help you in any way I can.”

“Hmm. How big is your budget?”

“To my regret, the Dukedom of Tarantos is very affluent. I have so much stuff that even if I half-ass my work and focus on my

training, my wealth would expand.”

“I see. Then.....”

Azell thought for a brief moment, then he asked for what he needed.

“In the end, this is for your benefit too, so I won’t turn down your help. If possible, please provide me with as many weapons, armors, magical recovery potions and Healers assigned to heal me. Also, I need a location where I can make a lot of noise without causing any problems.”

“I’ll lend you one of my villas I retreat to when I train. Why do you need weapons and armors?”

“I have a use for them.”

“Also, the Healers... Do you need more than one?”

“I would like as many as possible.”

“Why do you need them?”

“I plan on getting hurt a lot. It’ll probably be a bit too taxing for a single Healer.”

“I have no idea what you are trying to do.”

“Well, if you are curious, you can come visit me. Also, you can assign someone to observe what I’m doing. Since you are investing in me, I can tolerate that.”

“That’s.....”

Kairen put on a smile.

“That’s an attractive offer. So does this mean you aren’t worried about others stealing your secret?”

Spirit Order practitioners were like the magicians. They were very sensitive about the training methods they used. No, anyone would be wary about revealing secret techniques that was related to one’s survival. If one kept that in mind, Azell’s offer was unprecedented.

Azell spoke.

“I won’t stop you.”

“All right. I’ll give you servants, and I’ll stick someone to you that’ll steal all your secrets. Since you need some time to get ready, you can leave for the villa tomorrow morning. I require your presence when I’m making the Dragon Weapon, so I’ll notify you when I need you.”

“Understood.”

Azell would be leaving the Tarantos Castle, and he would travel to Kairen’s villa, which was located near the Lance Mountain. There were several locations designated as places where Kairen would train, and this was one of them. It was deep within the mountain, and it was far from prying eyes. The Lance mountain was the closest one, and this was why it was prepared for immediate human habitation.

Moreover, Azell was a bit surprised at the person that had been assigned to him by Kairen.

“I’ll be by your side for a while.”

During the night, Havanz had come to Azell to speak to him..

Azell had a expression as if he had been struck a blow.

“Aren’t you the steward of this household, Mr. Havanz?”

“Yes, I am.”

“Yet you are going to attend me?”

“Even if I am not here, the castle will run pretty well by itself. This was true when the duke wasn’t here, and it will still be the



case now. There are a lot of talented people in the Tarantos castle.”

“Hmmm.....”

“Moreover, I don’t want you to pay attention to my identity. I’m a Dragon Majin and a noble, yet I have spent a long time waiting on human guests. I don’t feel any resistance towards it. Moreover, it isn’t as if I’m going to serve you alone.”

“How many people are you bringing?”

“I’m thinking about bringing around 30 people....”

“.....”

“Please don’t look at me like that. Those personnel are needed to maintain the country villa.”

“I guess the place is quite big.”

“Amongst the training locations used by the duke, it is the ideal spot if you want to live in the wild. It is the closest location to the castle, so we spent a lot of effort in maintaining it. Still, if you don’t like the place to be crowded, I can bring around 15 people.”

“That still seems like a lot.”

“You aren’t the only person we have to serve, sir Azell. Three Healers will be staying with us.”

“Understood.”

Azell acquiesced. It would have been different if he was going alone. However, he didn’t want to inconvenience the Healers, because of what he preferred.

Azell spoke.

“I guess you are the spy the duke is sending, Mr. Havanz.”

“I feel like I’ve been pulled into a game, and it’ll be quite fun. The duke didn’t have anyone else suited for the job, so he sent me. Since it has been awhile since he had to listen to my nagging, I think he needed an excuse to send me away for a bit”

Havanz had a wide smile on his face. When he saw his smile, it reminded Azell of Rogan, and he became distracted.

Azell tried his best to hide his reaction as he spoke.

“Well, you seem to be quite skilled. I can tell from looking at your Dragon Demon magic that you’ve tempered it at some point.”

Those from the Dragon Demon race and the Dragon Majin was like the humans and their magic. There was a huge difference

between those, who trained their Dragon Demon qi, and those who didn't. Havanz had the profile of someone who had trained his Dragon Demon qi.

“Do you mind if I ask why a person like you is working as a steward? You seem to be in your prime as a Dragon Majin... Isn't it too early to retire from being a knight?”

“As you have surmised, I was a knight until 10 years ago.”

Dragon Majins were different from the Dragon Demon race. They matured at the same speed as humans until their secondary sexual characteristics developed. Still, the early stages of their life was longer than the humans, so Azell guessed Havanz was in his late 50s or early 60s.

“However, the work wasn't right for me. It didn't matter if I had the talent or not. As I lived my life as a knight, I found myself more interested in how an organization was run instead of the battles. Moreover, I found I liked fixing odd problems. This was why I told the duke my intention to retire and become a steward. The duke made me the heir to the previous steward on the spot.”

“.....”

“That's the truth. If the duke makes up his mind, he'll immediately act on it.”

“He definitely does that.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh. At the same time, he thought about Rogan.

‘It seems appearance isn’t the only thing that is similar to him.’

Rogan had been a powerful warrior from the Dragon Demon race. Rogan had won the confidence of his third teacher Liglan as a comrade. However, Rogan always focused more on preparation and planning rather of a battle rather than stepping forward to fight on the battlefields. In truth, he was more talented at it. Azell remembered him grouching at times.

‘Azell. What are you going to do when this shitty war ends?’

‘I’ve never thought about it.’

‘You are young, yet you are speaking that way? You need a dream.’

‘I’m sorry, but there can be no dreams bigger than defeating the Dragon Demon King. What about you?’

‘I want to go to my wife’s homeland, and I want to become a merchant. I’ll become a great merchant that everyone will look up to.’

‘Jeez... It is a dream that is very befitting you. If someone else

heard it, they'll say it is a dream that doesn't suit someone from the Dragon Demon race.'

It was as Rogan had said. He had returned to his wife's homeland when the Dragon Demon war ended. Maybe, he did become a great merchant as he had once dreamed. The only thing thing he could confirm was the fact that Rogan had descendants. Even after 200 years, the descendant remembered how Azell and Rogan had fought together.

Azell was lost in reverie when Havanz spoke.

"This is the first time I've been tasked to spy on someone. However, I'll give it my best. Please don't get uncomfortable if I stare at you too much."

"I don't really like receiving such a hot gaze from a man. However, it was something I suggested, so it can't be helped. Please look after me."

## 6

It was the afternoon of the next day. Azell and Havanz climbed the Lance Mountain. Azell was shocked when he found out 70 people would be ascending the mountain. However, Havanz was unperturbed.

"There are a lot of porters here. They'll descend afterwards. You requested too much luggage, sir Azell."

...Azell had requested as much weapons, armors and magic recovery potions that could be spared. Kairen had gathered all the items within the castle. It was so much that it would be impossible for 15 people to transport it.

The Lance mountain was pretty large. They reached the summit where a villa was built next to a valley. By then, the sun had almost set.

The workers were busy moving and organizing the luggage.

Azell was surprised by the villa's facilities.

“Which era was is this ruins from?”

The estate on the Lance mountain was about as big as one would expect from a noble. However, the surprising part was the fact that the estate was connected to a relic built towards the inner mountain.

Havanz spoke.

“I’ve heard it was made around 4-500 years ago. After excavating it, all the dangerous elements were cleared out. While building this estate, part of the ruins were renovated. It was meant to be a place where one could evacuate to in case of emergency... However around 30 years ago, the duke added another facility where he could train by himself.”

“I see.”

Azell had thought there would be an estate inside an untouched mountain. So what the hell was this? This was a training facility connected to a ruin. Even if the training facility hadn't been built, there was a very useful magical solution here.

‘It'll be hard to destroy this place, since it is equipped with a magic circulation device. It would have been really expensive to build all of this.... This is much better than what I expected.’

If one expended magical energy within the training facility, it'll be absorbed and circulated. It would create an ideal environment for a Spirit Order practitioner. When he asked Havanz about it, he was told the amount the facility could absorb could be increased.

“I've never even thought about these kinds of methods. I'll have to thank the duke again next time I see him.”

He was honest in his admiration. This facility would be very useful for Azell. If he wanted to recover a great deal of magical energy in a short amount of time, it would require drinking magic recovery potions. However, if he used this facility, he would be able to progress much faster than his previous estimation.

Havanz spoke.

“I don't know about other things, but he is very meticulous about

his training. The problem is he doesn't spare any expense when he builds these facilities."

People made a big fuss about organizing the villa, and since the sun was already set, the employees had to stay over for the night. However, Azell started his training immediately. He wasn't in a state where he could use the facilities available at the estate. The mountain was a good enough training ground for him right now.

'I have to build up my body.'

Azell was going to prioritize doing that instead of expanding his magic reservoir.

He had been awoken two month ago. He had been a skeleton, but now he was healthier than a normal person. Still, it wasn't enough. Magical energy had to seep into every part of his body or he wouldn't be able to exceed limitation of a human.

The Spirit Order Practitioner used magical energy to amplify one's physical ability. However, the amplification would be more effective if one's basic capability was high. Moreover, it would be easier to cope with bigger amplification when one had a sturdier body.

He had to eat, train like crazy then rest.

If he didn't eat, he couldn't remake his body. No matter how much he trained, his body would be slowly ruined if he didn't eat.



There were those who had become strong through live battles, but that was the experience side of becoming strong. If a martial artist received a wound in a live battle, there was a possibility of regression.

In the past two months, Azell didn't have the time to recover and train. He didn't have that luxury. He had to fight powerful foes with a lacking body, and he had to repeatedly squeeze out every ounce of his capabilities. He hadn't made as much progress as he wanted, and it was a wonder that he had taken any steps backward.

He had made an astonishing amount of progress in the two month, but it paled in comparison to his former self.

Azell was thankful for the environment he was in, and he exhaustively went through what he had learned in the past.

# Chapter 70 – Hero's Training (1)

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## 1

Keepers of the Prophecy.

The Guardian Shadows was an unidentified organization that was trying to eradicate Dragon Demon worshippers from the lands ruled by humans. They were beings shrouded in secrecy.

“We are no longer alive, so isn't it strange to use expression used by the living, kid Epsilon?”

A youth, who gave off an arrogant impression, had spoken. He had light red hair, and his appearance was very glamorous. He had on a twisted smile that was a bit creepy. He was looking at the Tarantos Castle from a long distance away.

“I don't know why I have to tell you every time I see you, but I'm older than you, kid Zares.”

Leone was the one, who had replied with an ambiguous tone. His words fluctuated from being respectful and insolent. He looked like a 15 year old, yet he had lived for a very long time. His time had frozen when he made the contract with the Guardian Shadows to become a Keeper of Prophecy.

Epsilon.

It was Leone's name as the Keeper of the Prophecy. It was a codename for the 5th seat of the Keepers of the Prophecy.

It was the same for Zares. He held the 15th seat of the Keepers of the Prophecy. His codename was Omicron.

"But you are a kid. Also, our designated names have meanings behind them. Why do you insist on calling me by my name? Just call me as Omicron."

"I don't want to, big kid Zares."

"If you want to treat me like human, shouldn't you be respectful towards the station I held as a human? I was someone of great importance before I became a Keeper of the Prophecy. You wouldn't have even dared to speak to me."

"It's quite fortunate for us. You have enough humanity left to blather on about your old glories."

"Hoong."

Leone replied without showing any signs of being angry, so Zares lost interest. He turned his head away. After a brief silence, he spoke.

"What about the others?"

“They aren’t here yet. It is unfortunate, since I would have preferred to see the others before I saw you.”

“I really have no idea what the criteria is for picking a Keeper of the Prophecy.”

“I have no idea. No one amongst us knows.”

“This is way beyond keeping secrecy. Why do we have to work in ignorance?”

“The reason is very obvious. Anyways, since you’ve called me out here, just tell me your business.”

“I thought you have a lot of free time?”

“I’d rather observe the ants marching near the road. I don’t want to waste my time listening to your sarcastic remarks.”

“All right. I’ll have to test that guy named Azell Zestringer to see if he is the prophesied being.”

“I’ve already tested him. Didn’t we arrive at a conclusion to give him more time?”

“I don’t remember agreeing to that conclusion. Moreover, your testing method was too soft. How will we be able to tell if he is the

prophesied one, who could bring an end to those Dragon Demon King's damn organization?"

"What are you going to do? It isn't as if you are going to fight him. I'll guarantee you'll cut off his head within 3 seconds."

"You have the eye to make such a judgement?"

"I know how poor your skills are. How long do you think you will last when fighting Zeta?"

"I think 5 seconds will be possible. It'll be hard to last past 10 seconds."

"You are unexpectedly good at not overrating yourself. That is your sole strong point, Zares."

"It isn't a strong point. It's just that I won't be able to do this job if I overrate myself. Still, I believe I have a better method to discern if he is the hero we have been waiting for."

Zares had a meaningful smile on his face. Leone really didn't like his expression.

"Please do not cause harm to the Dragon Sword Duke. He is one of the pillars of our organization, and he has a fiery temper. He'll probably crush you before you can tell him about your own self-importance. Then he'll make you a corpse after you give an explanation."

“I like the sound of that. However, I have no plans on squandering my time here in this domain. Moreover, it would be a problem if the Dragon Sword Duke stepped forward to interfere. I will also partially respect the decision you and Zeta came up with. When I was coming here, I heard the Dragon Sword Duke is preparing a fun event for Azell Zestringier.”

“He is going to order Azell Zestringier to do what those bastards at the Field of Darkness like to perform.”

“You are talking about the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

There was taint of insanity in Zares’ smile.

Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

It was a knowledge that had been completely wiped off the world after the Great Darkness. However, the Keepers of the Prophecy still had the information in their custody. This was possible, because some of their members had been born before the Great Darkness.

However, they didn’t possess all the knowledge, and this was true about the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

“A ritual to gain the power of a Dragon....”

This was all the information Leone and Zares knew about the Dragon Slayer's ritual. Even before the Great Darkness, the knowledge about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual had been scarce.

At times, high ranking Dragon Demon King worshippers exited the Field of Darkness. They carried out the Dragon Slayer's Ritual away from prying human eyes. However, they didn't do the Dragon Slayer's Ritual just because they wanted to get drunk on power. They did it to form the Dragon Qi. However, even the Keepers of the Prophecy didn't know about the Dragon Qi.

Moreover, the Dragon Demon King worshippers used the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to coerce the Dragons into do their bidding. The Dragons thirsted for the wisdom possessed by the humans, so the Dragons never refused the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. This was why the Dragon Demon King worshippers promised the Dragons that they'll attempt the Dragon Slayer's Ritual if the Dragons grant them one boon beforehand.

Zares spoke.

“The Earth Dragon that attacked the Dragon Demon Princess probably moved, because of that method. ”

Kairen had reported what Arrieta went through to the Guardian Shadows. The Keepers of the Prophecy shared this information amongst themselves. They suspected the Dragon Shadow used the Dragon Slayer's Ritual as bait to get the Earth Dragon to act.

Leone spoke.

“If it is as the Dragon Sword Duke suspects, Azell Zestringer completed the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. It is good news, since he basically stole the Dragon from under the Dragon Demon King worshippers.”

“It is praiseworthy. However, if he did succeed in such a test, we have to confirm it with our eyes.”

“Even if we don’t do anything, wouldn’t the Dragon Sword Duke create a proper spectacle for us to observe?”

“That won’t be enough. We have to prepare a more flashy tribulation for him. If we use the humans, we’ll be able to prepare a suitable stage.”

“Hmmm. You do as you please. You won’t listen to me even if I try to stop you. You have to take care of the aftermath.”

“You know me well. You can look forward to it.”

After saying those words, Zares turned his body away.

## 2

Havanz had become a spy, who observed Azell’s training. He was tasked to sending a report every week. In truth, he contacted the Tarantos castle more frequently than that. He had to attend Azell,



and he had to manage the estate located in the Lance mountain. Havanz had a lot of things he needed to request.

There was a magical communication array set up between the estate and the Tarantos castle. It was quite easy to contact the Duke. However, it had been 15 days since Kairen had heard Havanz's report personally. Problems had cropped up in the early stages of manufacturing the Dragon Weapon. Kairen hadn't had the time to listen to the reports.

The communication equipment was made out of glass and water. An enspelled bowl was filled with water, and the other side's image appeared when the magic was activated.

When Havanz's figure appeared on the surface of the water, Kairen asked a question.

“So how is he doing?”

“You ask about him the instant you see me?”

“Of course. He was the reason why I sent you there.”

“I knew you would do that. Mmmm. In my opinion, Sir Azell is a bit insane.”

“What did he do that made you come up with such an assessment?”

“He is great at coming up with weird methods to harm himself. I’m kind of worried that a rumor might start up about the methods he is using to try to kill himself.”

“Mmmm? Give me the specifics.”

“He is fighting with himself.”

“...I’m guessing you don’t mean it as figurative expression?”

“Then I wouldn’t have called it him trying harm himself. First, I’ll tell you about the easiest one that you will be able to comprehend. He is self sparring.”

“Self sparring? What is that?”

“I didn’t know what else to call it, so I made up the name. I don’t know what method Sir Azell is using, but he is making clones of himself. He equips these clones with armors and swords, then he fights them diligently.”

“Huh? Did I hear you wrong? The clones are using armor and weapon to fight the real body?”

“I’m still having trouble believing what I saw, but it is really as I have said.”

It was as the word ‘self sparring’ implied. Havanz continued to speak.

“I’ve continued to observe him, and the clones made by him are quite strong. In truth, they are at a level where I’m thankful I don’t have to fight them. Sir Azell also has to fight them with all his strength. At the end of the session, he needs healing by the Healers for the numerous wounds he receives.”

“Mmmm.....”

“Then there is the Dance of the Swords.”

“What is that?”

“This is something crazier. Even I’m able to use psychokinesis to move swords from a distance, but Sir Azell is able to move 20 swords at the same time.”

“If one is allowed to use magic, it shouldn’t be considered such an amazing task. Of course, one has to consider the amount of magic he has.....”

“I am willing to bet 100 gold that you aren’t fully comprehending what I’m trying to say.”

“I’m starting to get a little bit displeased. If a misunderstanding occurs after reading the regular report, then the report itself wasn’t clear enough.”

“This is why I implore you to be patient until I can give you a clear explanation. From my observation, the twenty swords moved as if each of them had a will of their own. Their movements was very sharp as if it was being swung by people... He was able to maintain it for ten minutes.”

“Basically, each sword moved as if the sword was being swung by different people? Each of the swords had a will of their own?”

“Yes. It is scarier than 20 swordsman charging at you. The tireless attacks are fearsome, and Sir Azell dodges them with bare hands. Moreover, he isn’t pulling back on these attacks. He is a bloody mess at the end, and once he suffered a really deep cut. The Healers are on their toes, because of all the wounds being taken by Sir Azell.”

“...I hope you aren’t telling me to believe this nonsense?”

“I’m a bit sad that you aren’t trusting my words. You should come see it for yourself.”

“Mmmm.....”

When he heard the stories, he felt dejected that he couldn’t see it for himself. He was so curious that he felt jealous of Havanz.

‘That Azell. His skills seems to be boundless. Did he perhaps not even show half of his capabilities when sparring with me?’

The thought suddenly made him angry. The impudent kid dared to fight him without showing his entire capability? Moreover, he won numerous times despite doing this?

‘Let’s see what happens when his training ends.’

Kairen was very petty, so he made a firm resolution.

Havanz continued to speak.

“Duke. I have something I want to ask you.”

“What is it?”

“You said Sir Azell is short on magical energy. Is this really true?”

“It’s the truth. There is no room for doubt.”

“Mmmm.....”

“What is it again?”

“For now, your assessment has been proven correct. Sir Azell falls over quite frequently from exhausting his magical energy. Every time that happens he drinks magic recovery potions like he’s

drinking water. I want to talk to you about the total cost of the magic recovery potions used by Sir Azell....”

“I don’t need to know about that kind of stuff. Just tell me what I want to hear about.”

“He broke the training facility. It was only a wall on a single side, so the magic itself wasn’t shattered.”

“...what?”

Kairen became surprised.

## Chapter 71 – Hero’s Training (2)

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When the place was built, he had driven Beorein Michael hard into making this training ground. A powerful magic was placed, and most expenditure of force shouldn’t even leave a dent. Of course, if Kairen made up his mind, he could destroy the place with his power. However, it was an impossible task if one considered Azell’s level of magical energy.

Havanz spoke.

“To be more precise, lightning fell.”

“Lightning strike? Are you saying he did this with an electrical attack?”

“I don’t mean it like that. Rain came down last night, and lightnings were falling. Sir Azell was hit by a lightning.”

“.....”

Havanz had on an expression that indicated he knew his words sounded preposterous.

“It was after Sir Azell’s training session had ended. He was getting treatment inside the estate. However, he excused himself when the rain and wind started to rage outside. In the distance, the sound of lightning rang out. After a while, Sir Azell stood in the middle of the training grounds with his sword raised into the air,

and the lightning struck him.”

“...so?”

“I thought Sir Azell had died. I ran to him in surprised. Please don’t ridicule me by saying I’m crazy. The lightning was surrounding Sir Azell’s entire body.”

“.....”

“Then he expelled the power in one go, and it parted the wall open. You can come see it for yourself. It sliced opened the wall, and the trees on the other side was all demolished.... It left behind a huge wound that’s about several hundred meter in length.”

“That’s impossible.”

Kairen let out a moan. There was a technique that allowed one to receive, control and emit the power of a lightning? A human who could do this existed?

The more surprising part was the fact that he had read a historical account of a human doing a similar feat.

Havanz spoke as he observed Kairen’s expression.

“I’m sure you are having the same thought as me. In fact, Sir Azell confirmed my suspicions.”



“What did he say?”

“Sir Azell named the technique as ‘Thunder Dragon’s Horn’.”

“.....”

Kairen let out a low moan.

Thunder Dragon’s Horn.

It was a trump card technique used on the battlefield by the Hero Azell Karzark, who had defeated the Dragon Demon King Atein. His single strike had been something more than a lightning sent down by nature. The lightning was amplified to a much stronger strike. In the records, it was said he cut several thousand of the Dragon Demon army in half using this technique.

Of course, Kairen hadn’t believed the record to be true. He thought it was an exaggerated legend. He had also thought the part where Azell Karzark called down the lightning to use the Thunder Dragon’s Horn was a falsehood.

“Such an event happened right in front of my eyes. In truth, I thought the stories of my grandfather’s exploits told by my parent were mixed in with idle boasts. However... The ‘Thunder Dragon’s Horn’ shown by Sir Azell was as it was described to me.”

“That bastard... I really am curious as to what his real identity is.”

“I’m also very curious. If someone told me Sir Azell was the reincarnation of the missing Azell Karzark, I would believe it. That’s how I feel right now.”

“This is not going to work. I’m going to immediately...”

“If you are going to say you’ll come here immediately, then please don’t. It is the middle of the night right now. You will cause a lot of inconveniences.”

“.....”

“Up until a moment ago, Sir Azell was using another fresh method to torture himself. He fell over from exhaustion. I’ll tell him you’ll be coming here tomorrow morning.”

“All right. If you want me be patient, you’ll have to give a detailed account of what this fresh method of torture entails.”

“I’m getting thirsty from talking so much. I feel like drinking some good alcohol.”

“.....I’ll bring some tomorrow. Stop getting cute with me. Hurry up and talk.”

“Understood. Today he.....”

Havanz spoke so much that he was worried he would have a hoarse throat afterward. However, he faithfully gave his report as a spy.

### 3

Azell's life at the Lance mountain estate was regimented.

He woke up in the morning at 6, and he carried out meditation and light training. Then he had breakfast at 7. After a brief break, he trained until lunch time where he took a brief break. After lunch, he trained until the evening when dinner was served at 6. After a brief break, he went out for a night training session. He finished all his training before 10, and he returned to eat a night snack. Then he would receive treatment. Afterwards, he did some light training before he went to sleep at midnight.

He slept for 6 hours daily.

If one considered Azell's superhuman capabilities, the amount of time he slept was long. If Azell was leading a normal life, he only needed two hours of sleep to get similar benefits.

However, he was pushing himself to the edge, and Azell decided that was the minimum amount of sleep he needed. It had been about two weeks since he started this plan, and he was satisfied with the result.

Havanz spoke.

“Basically, he spend about 14 hours a day training. Moreover, it is a harsh training where he pushes himself within an inch of his life. He does it for 7 days a week.”

“It is impossible for normal people, but it isn’t impossible for a Spirit Order practitioner. ”

Kairen replied. A superhuman could handle a much more demanding schedule compared to a regular person.

“Still, he is keeping up such an unforgiving pace for 14 hours a day, and 7 days a week. It is frightening.”

Moreover, when Havanz told Kairen about Azell’s training method, it was so difficult that Kairen was suspicious as to whether the information was true or not. The level of difficulty in terms of technique and intensity was almost unbelievable.

“So where’s the young fellow at?”

The person, who posed the question, was Beorein. He couldn’t sit on his curiosity, so he had followed after Kairen.

Havanz spoke.

“He is probably running through the wild mountain like a madman. He is probably conducting his self many-to-one mountain warfare.”

“...self many-to-one mountain warfare? What the hell is that?”

“He equips his clones with weapons and armors then he scatters them. As he runs through the mountain, he fights a many-to-one battle. Before the two of you arrived here, I confirmed his activities.”

“.....”

The self sparring had evolved into self many-to-one mountain warfare. It felt as if they were listening to some fantasy. Kairen and Beorein looked at each other, and they shared a strong empathetic feeling with each other.

Havanz took the two of them towards the training facility. First, he wanted to show them the remnants of the destruction caused by the ‘Thunder Dragon’s Horn.’

“My god.”

Beorein almost let out a moan as he mumbled to himself.

The training ground was made by cutting into the side of the mountain. It had a diameter of 50 meter, and the training ground was steeply terraced. Moreover, it was surrounded by walls that

was over 10 meters high. It was made akin to a castle wall. Moreover, this sturdy wall had been reinforced with incredibly powerful protection magic.

The wall had been split.

Kairen attentively looked through the uneven gap that had been created, and he mumbled to himself.

“That guy did this.....”

The impression was made two days ago, but they could still feel the trace of a strong magic.

Beorein spoke.

“If you told me this fellow was a magician disguised as a Spirit Order practitioner, I would believe it.”

“It seems magicians aren’t the only ones that can create destruction on a large scale.”

“No, I’m not talking about that. Try focusing on the flow of magic in the immediate surrounding. An unbelievable event is occurring.”

“Mmmm?”

Kairen gave a quizzical look, and he did as he was told. Then his eyes widened.

“What the hell? The magic of the training grounds is being drawn outwards?”

“It seems it is the work of our friend. If one thought about it, the self many-to-one mountain warfare isn’t something he could maintain with his own magic. He used his authority over this facility’s Control magic to draw out the magic towards outside.”

“Is that suppose to be possible?”

“Until now, I didn’t think it was possible for a Spirit Order practitioner to do what he did. It makes me want to immediately get a hold of him and ask him how he did it.”

Kairen and Beorein elevated their bodies to get on top of the wall. They observed the remnant of the attack that stretch far beyond the wall. The two of them became speechless.

“.....”

“...Kairen. I want to ask you something.”

“What is it?”

“Can you do this?”

Kairen didn't have an immediate answer to the question.

Across the split wall, evidence of large scale destruction continued along the ridge of the mountain. The trees that had been within the attack's trajectory had been uprooted as it was destroyed and burned. There furrow about 2 meters deep. The more surprising fact was that the mark of the attack ended at around 500 meters. However, they presumed the attack had traveled much farther than that distance.

Beorein gave an estimate.

"If we assume the attack had followed across the terrain, the energy was released towards the sky.

"It split the peak in half."

The peak of the mountain had really been cut in half, and one side had collapsed. Kairen observed the vestige.

"Mmmm. If we are talking about pure destructive power, I could probably do it."

"Really?"

"However, the attack was very focused. I can't guarantee it. In what way could a lightning be harnessed to be able to leave behind



such a trace?”

Kairen had studied martial arts and Dragon Ridge arts for a span of a human lifetime. He wasn't a magician, but he had become very adept at changing various elements into magic. He was able to cause a natural disaster in a very limited area.

Did a lightning really have enough power to leave behind this remnant? Was this really the power of this element? He didn't have an answer.

Beorein spoke.

“I can see why he wanted a training ground where no friends and humans are nearby. Anyways, shall we go observe this thing called self many-to-one mountain warfare?”

Havanz led the two people towards Azell's location.

“Huk, huk.....”

Azell was a bloody mess as he leaned against a tree. His heart pulsed roughly, and it was sending a signal that his body had almost reached its limit. However, Azell ignored this warning. He used the vibration caused by the pulse of his heart to generate a massive amount of magic. He filled the magic into his Energy Pulse as it bolstered the vitality of his body.

This wasn't really a smart thing to do. If he overloaded the

system like this, he could use a great amount of power in the short term. However, it would ruin his body in the long term.

However, this was all within Azell's calculations. He had to use various methods to push his body towards its limit.

At that moment, he heard a rustle from above his head. Azell moved his body without even looking up.

Pah-ahng!

The sword clashed against sword, and a sound of an explosion rang out instead of the sound of steel. The blue light exploded, and the surrounding trees shook noisily.

Azell was a beat late in finding his ambusher. His enemy was himself, who was wearing a mishmash of armors. The clone was a perfect replicate of Azell's appearance. However, it didn't have any injury or blemish. The clone gave off a very inhuman aura.

The clone immediately adjusted its stance, and it attacked him. It hadn't just run towards him. It used a mental wave to confuse Azell's senses, and a powerful lightning sword strike was swung towards him.

Pah-jee-jee-jeek!

Right when Azell parried the attack, another clone ran out from the rear thicket.

It had perfectly hidden its presence, so Azell didn't realize it was there until it had approached a certain distance. However, he was able to use his vision and sound to pick out its presence.

Azell's body moved fast like a streak of lightning.

CHul-koo-ruhk! Chul-kuhk!

Then the ownerless swords and armors fell to the floor.

Azell maintained his pose for a brief moment, and he suddenly spoke.

"If you do that, there is a chance you might be attacked, Duke."

"Hmmm. I wanted to get in a blow, but you really have a nose of a dog."

Kairen had hidden himself on top of a tree. After observing the situation, he was inching forward when Azell became aware of him.

"I'm not done with my training yet... Well, I guess I'll have to end it here."

Azell sheathed his sword. Then a magical wave started to flow out from various places inside the forest.

Beorein, who had been hiding at some distance, exclaimed in surprise.

“There are so many of them.”

Twelve clones walked towards Azell. They all looked like Azell, but they all had a perfectly expressionless face. They were becoming blurry now, and they were semi-translucent. One could see the surrounding through their bodies.

Azell spoke as they approached.

“It is tiring to carry around all these equipments. Let’s head on back first.”

Azell ordered the expressionless clones to pick up all the equipments left behind by the defeated clones. Then they returned to the estate. Beorein had on an expression that was akin to someone wanting to run towards the restroom. He wanted to ask questions, but Azell had said they would talk when they reached the estate. This had been turned into a trial of patience for him.

# Chapter 72 – Hero's Training (3)

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4

“Are you perhaps the reincarnation of Azell Karzark?”

Azell couldn't hold back his laughter when Kairen threw the question towards him after they arrived at the estate.

“Why would you think that?”

“I researched it once I came here.... Your appearance is very similar to the portrait of Azell Karzark.”

When he was staying at the capital, Kairen said there weren't that many portraits of Azell Karazark left in the world. Before Azell went to sleep, he had despised letting someone draw him. He hadn't given any permission for artists to draw him, so it was understandable why his portraits were scarce. It was probably a portrait made by someone, who had met him in real life. It was based on the artist's memory of him.

“Do you think I can see that portrait? I am curious as to see how closely I resemble him.”

“I'll show it to you later. Of course, I came here for another reason. I got a report saying you used a technique called the 'Thunder Dragon's Horn' to cause a massive amount of damage to my property.”

“I’m sorry about the destruction. Still, I was sure you wouldn’t ask me to pay for it.”

Azell spoke as laughter escaped from his mouth.

“Let’s see... Mmmm. Would you believe me if I told you this particular story behind my identity?”

“Go on.”

“Azell Karzark went missing two years after the Dragon Demon war had ended. There’s no record on his continued survival or death. Isn’t that so?”

“Yes.”

“What if the Archmage Carlos devoted himself to creating a magic that induced Azell to go into a long hibernation? What if this magic stopped the ageing process? What if I told you that Azell Karzark was placed in a location away from public notice and a place where humans had never settled? What if he slept for a long time like a Dragon in hibernation?”

“And he woke up in this era, and that person is you? Is that the gist of the story?”

“Yes.”

“It is a very amusing story. Of course, I hope you don’t expect me to believe such a story.”

“Of course, I didn’t expect it.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh. In the past, he had worried over whether he should tell other people about his real identity. However, he always struggled to come up with a way to prove the truth behind his story. Nothing was more frustrating than trying to convince the other to believe an outrageous story even if it was the truth.

Azell spoke.

“There is an answer that is a little bit more easier to digest. What if I am a descendent of Azell Karzark that had been unknown to the world?”

“You are?”

“Yes.”

“Hmmm.....”

Kairen furrowed his eyebrows. If it was someone else, he would have called it a lie. However, Azell’s words sounded plausible.

‘They do look like two peas in a pod.’

The burning red hair and blue eyes wasn't the only physical characteristic that matched up. His overall appearance matched up with the portrait of Azell Karzark and the information gathered by Kairen. There were too many similarities.

Until now, he had been suspicious of Azell's identity. He was sure Azell was an enemy of the Dragon Demon King worshippers, but everything else brought up more questions than answers.

He was willing to let go of the partial memory loss. He had heard a detailed account from Giles about how they had found Azell. Kairen admitted that complications like memory loss could be explained by the state Azell was in.

It would also explain why his magical energy was so small compared to Azell's skill as a Spirit Order Practitioner.

This wasn't Kairen's conjecture. It was the Archmage Beorein's opinion.

‘It is an interesting story. If I had to speculate, it sounds likely. Let's say his life had been in danger. To be precise, if he was wounded in a way where a normal person wouldn't be able to survive, he might have acted to preserve his life. In the process, his Energy Pulse might have dried up then his magical energy would have been swept up. Since he isn't an Undead, the magical energy would have combined with his life force to maintain the vessel.’



Even if one took those two speculations to be the truth, it still left the question of Azell's origin. There was the question on how he became so skilled at a young age, and he knew techniques no one should know about... To be precise, he knew about the lost knowledge only known to the Dragon Demon worshippers.

Azell spoke.

“The knowledge about Dragon Slayer's Ritual and the Spirit Order special techniques was passed down from generation after generation. Will you be able to accept that fact?”

“I'm also having a very hard time believing that story. However....”

Kairen looked at Azell with a serious expression. It was as if he was trying to read the truth from Azell's expression and eyes.

Indifferent eyes looked back at Kairen. It was as if he didn't care if Kairen believed him or not. This attitude got on Kairen's nerve a little bit.

“You should try a little bit harder to convince me.”

“I have no intention of doing so.”

“What?”

Kairen's brows twitched. Azell spoke.

“No matter what story I tell you it'll be hard for you to accept it as the truth. I understand that. In truth, I don't have any reasons to pour my heart and soul into convincing you. If you believe me, then that's great. If not, it is all well and good. However, the important part is already resolved.”

“What do you mean?”

“We aren't enemies.”

“.....”

“Ah. Now that I've talked to you about it, this is a bit disappointing. That's right. You aren't my enemy. Moreover, I'll state that you are my comrade in battle. If a Dragon Demon worshipper threatens the Duke, I'll willingly stand by your side with my sword raised. Isn't that enough?”

“...hoo.”

Kairen let out a laugh in spite of himself.

He was happy. The irritation that had taken a hold of him was completely gone. He was happy at Azell's words.

Kairen leaned back into his chair as he spoke.

“It would have been dangerous if you had been a woman.”

“Why?”

“I probably would have fallen for you. You are impudent and shameful, but you keep saying things I really like.”

“I’ll just take solace in the fact that the Duke doesn’t swing that way. Ah. With that being said, Mr. Havanz begs of you to meet with young ladies, who sent in their marriage proposals....”

“It is enough that I already have my household worrying about me dying alone in my old age. So please shut up. There is still a very long time before my prime marrying age ends.”

Those of the Dragon Demon race lived for over 300 years, so he wasn’t wrong. Michael spoke.

“Still, you are the head of the house, and you have been living a life of bachelorhood for over 100 years. Of course, they would bug you about it. You don’t even have siblings, so shouldn’t you be more worried about who you’ll entrust with your affairs in the future?”

“At the same time, I don’t want to be like you. You had children during your prime, yet you refuse to give up your post as the head of the household even at your age. Isn’t that also a serious problem?”

“It isn’t as if I wanted it to be like that. Actually, I’ve finally managed to settle my affairs, and the succession ritual will happen at the end of this year. You have nothing to say, right?”

“Kook.....”

Kairen had a betrayed expression on his face as he quickly changed the subject.

“Anyways, if you are really the descendant of Azell Karzark... It is an inspiring event. The hero’s bloodline, which was assumed to have ended, stand unbroken in this era.”

“Wasn’t Azell Karzark officially unwed?”

“That is true, but Azell Karzark had adopted several children. There had been some speculation that they were his illegitimate children.”

“.....”

Azell really wanted to plead his innocence regarding the issue, but he held himself back.

‘Apart from my adopted children, I can’t guarantee I hadn’t sired any children. Mmmm.’

In truth, Azell had slept with a lot of women during the Dragon Demon War. It wouldn't have surprised him if someone had Azell's child without him knowing about it. It was the reality of the era he had been living in. He didn't know if he would get to see the next day, so he had been true to the passion of the moment... It was an era where one was running through the darkness, and one's lifeline was always pressed up against a blade.

“We'll never know if that point of view was real or not. The household of Marquis Karzark was exterminated, so this conversation is pointless.”

“.....what did you just say?”

Azell raised his voice in spite of himself. It was as if someone had delivered a blow to the back of his head. He lost his composure from the shock. Azell asked with a shaking voice.

“Did you just say the household of Marquis Karzark was wiped out? Is that really true?”

“You didn't know about it?”

“...I didn't know. The history books didn't mention any...”

“Mmmm.”

Kairen was taken aback as he looked at Azell. He had never seen Azell outwardly display his shock before. If one received the

education of a noble family, this should have been common knowledge. So why was he showing such a reaction?

He wondered about Azell's upbringing. Kairen was puzzled as he spoke.

"The household of Marquis Karzark was exterminated, and his lands were designated as the Devil's Territory. It happened at the twilight of the Great Darkness. I can see why the books you read didn't have that story in there. It isn't even part of our country's history..."

"....."

Azell was at a loss for words. The shock was so large that he felt his head spin.

They hadn't been related by blood, but he had truly loved the children like his own family. He had asked Carlos and his friends to look over them. He hadn't expected them to be prosperous, but he had thought their lines would still be alive to this day. He had planned on searching the descendants of his adopted children. He had been planning on reminiscing after finding them... This small hope had been inside his heart.

'Wait a moment. This isn't the time to become limp from the shock.'

Azell slowly took a deep breathe. He used Spirit Order to control

the mental shock, and he slowly calmed his heart. After a moment, Azell asked a question.

“...do you perhaps know what caused it?”

“I heard the land of Marquis Karzark was designated as the Devil’s Territory, because the Dragons went berserk there.”

“The Dragons went berserk?”

“Over ten Dragons went on a rampage, and the monsters moved in afterwards. If you want a more detailed account, I’ll send you books that describe the event.”

“Please.”

After giving his answer, an uncontrollable fire started to burn deep with Azell’s eyes.

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Kairen and Beorein left only after they drowned Azell with questions throughout the night. Beorein still had a mountainous amount of question he wanted to ask, but he wistfully parted ways when Azell asked to end the meeting. He promised to answer their questions at a different date.

After sending the two people away, Azell immersed himself back into his training.

He kept up a rigorous schedule that exceeded the boundary of human limitation. He had been doing this for exactly a month since he arrived at the Lance mountain.

After that point, he started slacking off as if the severe training had all been a lie. He slept eight hours from night to morning, and he slept 4 hours in the middle of the day. He slept for 12 hours everyday. Aside from sleeping, he only did light exercise, and he focused on meditation.

When this continued for the 4th day, Havanz couldn't hold back his curiosity as he questioned Azell about it.

"I know this isn't a great attitude for a servant to have... However, as a spy, it is hard for me to overlook this."

"A spy is someone, who observes the target in secret. You have plainly revealed your intentions and role to the one you are suppose to observe. You are now asking direct questions to gain more information. I don't think you are suppose to do that."

"My situation is a bit unique to be following the common approach. Isn't it?"

"I guess so. Well, it isn't some big secret, so I'll tell you. I'm still training very hard right now."

"Rest is training... Is that what you are trying to say?"



“It is a bit more nuanced than that. I’ve pushed my body to the brink for 30 days. I need to rest 10 days. It’ll allow me to be able to digest what I gained. This is my training cycle.”

“So that is why you are passing the time in this fashion.”

“I’ve stimulated every inch of my body, and now I have to regulate everything. I’ll stop my explanation here.”

“Hmmm. Sir Azell has a lot of secrets.”

“It is your job to mine for my secrets. I believe I’ve given you enough hints.”

Azell grinned.

## Chapter 73 – Hero's Training (4)

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He trained to the extreme for 30 days, and he rested for 10 days. This was his optimal training cycle, but he didn't have to keep to the schedule. The important part was the ratio. If he wanted to reduce the training time, he could train to the extreme for four days, then he would need only a single day of rest.

The training he performed up until now had stimulated every single inch of his body. This was true for his bones, muscles, nerves, blood vessels... Every single one of his cells were stimulated as he drove them to move. As he became more aware of his own body, the job of consolidating his body occurred.

At the same time, the stimulation would cause the creation of extra magic, and he sent it into his Energy Pulse. He worked on expanding his Energy Pulse. This resulted in his magic being able to flow to every inch of his body, and his body was strengthened.

The act of recovering from injury was also part of this process.

An injured body worked differently from one's normal body, and Azell even put this phenomena to use.

This was the true worth of the Body Strengthening technique that had been passed down to Azell by Liglan. When one trains the mind, one has to find out the basic anatomy of the mind. Usually, one used one's body without doubt. This process allowed him to understand his body, and it brought his body under control.

‘Half a year’s time should be enough.’

He felt endlessly thankful toward Kairen.

Azell suddenly asked a question.

“I’m have some questions I want to ask you, Mr. Havanz.”

“What is it?”

“I would like to ask you about you grandfather. It is about the Dragon Demon Duke Rogan Aludin, who fought with Azell Karzark.”

He had lied to Kairen about seeing Rogan’s portrait. The books Azell had read had only brief passages describing Rogan as one of the heroes.

This was why he wanted to hear about Rogan from his descendent. He wanted to hear what kind of life Rogan had lead after the Dragon Demon War ended...

“I’m guessing Mr. Havanz never met him personally?”

“Yes. He passed away long ago. He passed away long before Sir Azell was born....”

“Ha ha ha.”

Of course, that wasn't possible. Azell let out a bitter laugh inside.

Havanz asked him a question.

“How old do you think I am?”

“Mmm. Let's see. I'm guessing you are in your mid-60s. ”

Havanz had a surprised expression at his words.

“You are amazing. I've never met someone, who guessed my age so accurately on the first try. People get confused whether I am a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin.”

“A Dragon Majin's age is hard to estimate just based on their outer appearance. However, I formulated my guess based on your occupation. No matter how talented you are, you would need more than 10 years to be trained as a steward. This was why I guessed that age. I thought you couldn't be older than mid-60s.”

“Sometimes, Sir Azell doesn't act like a young person. Your insight is amazing.”

Havanz continued speaking as he burst out into laughter.

“These are words I heard from my father. Grandfather was someone, who lived for over 300 years, so he was like a living history book. He loved telling stories. My father and the elders of my household relayed many of his stories to me.”

“Like what?”

“After the Dragon Demon war ended, he had started a business. He lost all his fortunes in that venture, and he had gone into bankruptcy.”

“...huh?”

Azell’s eyes turned round. Rogan was quick and facile in calculating profit and loss. He had been very efficient in managing the army’s supply. A person like that drove his business into bankruptcy?

Havanz spoke.

“Grandfather had started his first business after the Dragon Demon war had ended. At the time, he had thought the world was his oyster... Or that was what he had said. However, the aftermath of the Dragon Demon war resulted in humans holding animosity towards the Dragon Demons. Even though my grandfather had fought for the humans, he wasn’t free from receiving their scorn.”

“Ah.....”

“Unlike his management of the army in the Dragon Demon war, he had to act ruthless against his trading partners. At times, he would have to act like a demon, but that was easier said than done.... There were also some high profile figures, who held ill feelings towards the Dragon Demon race. In the end, he lost all the money he had saved up, and he had gone into debt. At the time, he said his future had looked very bleak. He hated the humans enough where he had thought about killing them all. He had put his life at great risk to save the humans in the Dragon Demon War. If another Dragon Demon war broke out, he thought about siding with the other side...”

“.....”

Azell was speechless as he felt an ache inside his heart. Azell had thought Rogan would have lived well as a hero of the Dragon Demon war. However, reality wasn't that kind. It was common to see many wartime heroes fall into being useless humans when time of peace arrived. It seemed Rogan held similar risk factors that lead to the downfall of the former heroes.

Havanz continued to speak.

“However, humans were also the ones, who had saved him. Even during those tough times, my grandmother never left his side, and she supported him... Then there were the humans he had befriended during the Dragon Demon war. He was able to get back up on his feet with the help of the people, who received his help during the Dragon Demon war. Then he came to an understanding.”

“What was it?”

“He shouldn’t dream about becoming a great merchant unless he was prepared to become a demon.”

“Basically... He couldn’t bring himself to become a demon.”

“Yes. I feel the same way as him. I wanted to be in a position where I’ll be allowed to run an organization. I can invest my feelings into each member of the organization. In business, one have to see the people making up one’s organization as interchangeable parts or a number. If one can’t do this, it would be best to stay clear from being a merchant. One would have to find a different path. Grandfather found that different path. He passed on the family’s business to his children after making sure it would run adequately. When my grandmother died, he lived a very busy life.”

“Busy?”

“Yes. He was our Duke’s teacher, and he also played the game of being a hero as he traveled to various regions.”

“He played a game of being a hero?”

“This was how grandfather described it with his word. He didn’t like putting humans in difficulty through his business dealings. It would cause the humans to hate him. Instead, he preferred saving people in trouble. He’d rather hear gratitude from humans after

saving them, so he took up saving people as a hobby. He traveled far and wide, so you'll be able to hear stories about my grandfather from various parts of the continent."

"Ha ha ha."

Azell couldn't help, but laugh.

It was really a story befitting Rogan. This was really like the Rogan Azell had known. Rogan had been very talented at running an organization, but he was very compassionate. He had a bleeding heart. Even as the army was running short on supplies, he gave food to the children of the refugee groups the army ran across. He would say he could do without food for awhile as he gave the children his portion of the food. How could someone like him become a great merchant, who were like cold-hearted devils?

'It seems you lived a merry life, Rogan.'

It was unfortunate that he'll never meet Rogan again. However, he felt consoled by the fact that Rogan had lived a rich life. He was someone Azell had trusted to protect his back in a fight. He was also a friend, who shared nonsensical stories with him as they shared drinks... He was also Azell's savior. Rogan had been at the site of his teacher's death, and he allowed Azell to put his life on the line for the future.

'Don't act like a child, young human. A great man like him just entrusted you with the future. Even if it feels dirty, live on to become a hero. If you don't, you will despise yourself for the rest of



your life.'

Azell remembered wrapping himself in those words as he charged into the hailstorm of arrows and magic.

After that day, Azell took time at odd intervals to hear about Rogan from Havanz. Azell buried his memory of Rogan in his mind until he would be able to look back and see his smile.

## 6

Beorein spoke in a tired manner.

"The shape has somewhat taken form."

They were in their third month of dedicating themselves to manufacturing the Dragon Sword.

The process of making the Dragon Weapon was strictly a magical process. Even the act of carving the Dragon Bones into the shape of the desired weapon wasn't done by hand. It had to be done by magic.

Kairen spoke.

"Still, I'm more comfortable at doing this compared to the first time we tried this out."

“It had been a long time since we made the first one. Of course, the production process has been much improved. Moreover, if the maker has a Dragon Weapon at one’s disposal, the process become that much easier.”

“Jeez. We have to pour in Dragon Demon magic as if we are pouring in water.”

The Dragon Weapon was seeped with Dragon Demon magic. Even a human would be able to use Dragon Demon magic with this weapon. This was why a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin had to pour in an incredible amount of Dragon Demon magic from the start of the manufacturing process.

Currently, the production of Azell’s Dragon Sword had gone smoothly, so they were at the halfway point. However, the unfinished Dragon Weapon floating atop the magic circle didn’t look anything like a sword. It looked like a stone had been half-halfheartedly chipped away. It had the rough shape of a sword.

Kairen spoke.

“Is it ok for you to vacate your seat for too long? I thought you would travel back couple times during the process.”

“My friend. Isn’t it a bit too late to ask that question now?”

“Well, I’ll admit I am a bit late in asking the question.”

“Anyways, it isn’t a problem.”

Beorein had already appointed his successor to the title of Count Michael. He had created a great system where everything would run smoothly even if he was absent.

“It isn’t a problem as a lord or a member of the Guardian Shadow.”

“Hmm. Were your disciples entered into the Guardian Shadow?”

“Yes. The number of Guardian Shadow members have increased drastically with our country.”

Archmage Beorein had seven disciples excluding his descendants. He had entered four of his most trusted and talented disciples into the Guardian Shadow. For the near future, it would alleviate the shortage of manpower.

Beorein spoke.

“It took a long time. It really....”

It was quite odd for him to be so active in the affairs of his land. He should have seceded his title of count to his descendant already. Dragon Majin lived longer than humans, but their lives were short-lived compared to the Dragon Demon. At Beorein’s age, he should

have been retired from the society of nobles. Even those of the Dragon Demon race retired after an adequate amount of time passed. They married a little bit later than humans, but the title of nobility was passed on unless there was a special circumstance that prevented it like Kairen.

There was also an unusual circumstance behind Beorein's long reign as the Count. Around 30 years ago, Beorein had lost all his heirs to this title. He had lost all his children and grandchildren to the Dragon Demon Worshipers. Everyone's sympathy towards Beorein lasted for a brief moment. Every one of his relatives came at him for his title of Count, so his household and lands was put in a very bad spot.

At the time, Beorein didn't even know who he should blame for the deaths. Even as he fell into despair, the Dragon Demon worshippers continued their work to destroy him.

It was at that point when the Guardian Shadow appeared in front of Beorein. The Guardian Shadow repelled a trap set by the Dragon Demon worshippers, and Beorein had willingly become a member of the Guardian Shadow.

It took a long time to stabilize his domain, and he had groomed another successor.

For a brief moment, Beorein had fallen into his old memories.

Beorein spoke.

“Let’s put the issue of marriage aside. You should try a little bit harder to grow the membership of the Guardian Shadows.”

“I’m actually eyeing some of my more competent subordinates. I’m also thinking about entering Arrieta and Seigar into the organization.”

“I’m sure the Dragon Demon Queen will oppose it. Moreover, those two have too much burden on their shoulders. We need members, who can travel around freely. Princess Arrieta and Prince Seigar are tied to the throne, so they aren’t suitable candidates.”

“That is true, but...”

The Dragon Demon Queen was a member of the Guardian Shadow. Her children and the King didn’t know about this fact. However, she had basically retired when she entered the throne as the Dragon Demon Queen.

Beorein spoke.

“Do you really believe the words spoken by our friend, Azell?”

“My friend. Isn’t it a bit too late to ask that question now?”

“You turned my exact words against me.”

“I believe him. I’ll admit there are a lot of dubious parts to his story, but in spite of those facts, I still believe him.”

“You are completely taken with him. Tsk tsk. This is why you are still a bachelor.”

“How are those two things related?”

“I’ve never seen you completely taken with anyone. Your tastes are so eccentric that it is too hard to find a woman that you’ll be able to live your life with. It would have been great if Azell had an older sister or a younger sister.”

“.....”

Beorein smirked as he changed the subject.

“Well, okay. You are blind to love, but I’ll agree that you have a discerning eye for humans. Anyways, he is endlessly fascinating when seen through the eyes of a magician.”

Beorein was in awe of the various techniques displayed by Azell. He spoke to Azell deep into the night, and he was gaining so much from those conversations.

“If that friend really the descendent of Azell Karzark... I’m really curious about that fact.”

“What are you curious about?”

“I wonder why Azell Karzark hid himself in the latter years of his life. Moreover, what is his descendant, who inherited all the techniques forgotten in this era, trying to accomplish? I can’t help, but wonder.”

“Maybe, he foresaw a danger in the future.”

“He prepared a descendant for the trouble that’ll come in the future?”

“Isn’t that likely?”

“I sincerely hope not. However, if that does happen, do you think our friend will be the vessel to stop the threat?”

“I believe in him. Somehow, I feel as if he’ll pave a path into the future no matter what happens in the future... He generates such belief in me.”

Azell had never tried to dazzle Kairen with his words. It didn’t matter if Azell’s words were believed or not. Azell proved his worth through his actions. He liked that attitude, and it had moved Kairen’s heart.

Beorein smirked.

“As a Dragon Majin, you are considered young, but you have gotten older. You are talking about entrusting the future to the young.”

“I really do sound like an old man. Shit.”

Kairen frowned.



# Chapter 74 – Hero's Training (5)

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7

He had a dream.

It was a dream about the era when despair of darkness hung over the world.

It was during the heyday of the Dragon Demon war, and the human coalition was careful in how they dispatched Liglan. He was able to subdue most Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins inside the Dragon Demon king's army. He was one of the hidden cards that was able to go toe to toe with the four Dragon Demon Generals. Everyone knew how big of a problem would be created if they lost him. The human coalition didn't put him in harm's way unless it was a critical situation.

Unfortunately, the Dragon Demon king's army also treated Liglan as if he was someone important.

“...such a large trap.”

Liglan mumbled to himself in disbelief.

He was someone with a righteous character, but he had the capability of keeping the whole picture in perspective. He was well-aware of his own worth, and this knowledge caused him to feel guilt. He always had to make cold-hearted decisions where he

had to take as little risk as possible. This caused him to shed tears of blood.

Unfortunately, Liglan could have never predicted that the Dragon Demon king's army would sacrifice 10,000 of their own to kill him.

“I never expected the day when we would have to use him as a bait to catch a human.”

The one who spoke was ‘The Blood shed by a star’ Baldazark. He was one of the the four Dragon Demon Generals. He had beautiful blonde hair, and his two horn looked like carved ice infused with color. He was a youthful looking Dragon Demon. Unlike his young noble appearance, he was a Dragon Demon, who had lived for several hundred years. He was a walking history book, and he possessed a level of power that was on a different level than the regular Dragon Demons.

Moreover, he wasn't the only special Dragon Demon present here.

“I never expected to receive an order to attack a human from both sides. This is so humiliating that I will die in a fit of rage when I go to sleep. You should think of this as an honor.”

He was one of the other Dragon Demon Generals called ‘The Sword that parts a storm’ Almarick. He growled as he spoke. He had messy white hair that hung low. He had tumultuous red eyes, and his thick horns were like volcanic stones. He looked like a

middle aged man with a ferocious face akin to a lion. He was also someone, who had surpassed the limitation of a Dragon Demon's life expectancy.

Baldazark spoke.

“Honor is important. However... The king even put his child's life on the line for this. That is how much he wants us to kill this human once and for all. We have no choice, but to follow the order.”

“I already know this. You don't have to lecture me, Duke Baldazark.”

Aldrick shot back with his words.

Dragon Demon King Atein's second son Saibein had been used as bait to attract Liglan.

Saibein had been full of drive as he lead forth a large army. However, he had been thoroughly defeated. Saibein had received a severe wound, and he was at death's doors. His surviving army was fleeing with him in tow. Liglan had lead his forces into a fierce pursuit.

However, Liglan had never expected that Saibein and his 10 thousand troops was a trap placed to entice him into attacking them.

Baldazark spoke.

“You shouldn’t expect any backup. Currently, a series of attack is occurring against the your fortress. Aunsaurus is facing off against that impudent child named Carlos.”

“So three Dragon Demon Generals were mobilized to kill a single person?”

“That’s right. You should think of it as an honor. He had to give up two regions under our control, and another region where we had the upper hand. We had to completely give up three battle fronts to be able to kill you. We are showing you this respect since his majesty’s best disciple was defeated by you.”

The battle happened the time before the last one, Liglan had killed one of Atein’s disciples. The disciple had thought no human would dare to face him. However, Ligilan had overwhelmed the disciple in one on one battle. Liglan had delivered a significant blow to the army after he killed the disciple. His dazzling performance had curdled the blood of the Dragon Demon king’s army.

Baldazark spoke.

“We have to kill you in no uncertain terms, Sir Liglan. Let’s start this before all of your underlings die.”

“.....”

Liglan grinded his teeth.

His subordinates were dying on every side. When they had entered this basin, the hidden Dragon Demon King's army appeared to bombard them in a savage manner. It was as if they didn't care if the enemy killed the critically wounded Saibein. The attack pretty much decimated the troops that had joined Liglan in his pursuit.

Liglan exclaimed.

“Do you think I'll let you bastards do as you like!”

At the same time, Liglan planted his pair of Dragon Maken into the ground. The ground shook as if an earthquake was occurring. Surprisingly, the seismic wave exploded as it avoided the locations where Liglan's comrades were present.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

Baldazark was astonished when he saw this.

“Huh-uh! Amazing!”

The Dragon Demon army had been attacking from an advantageous location, yet this attack had put the two sides in a more even ground. Before Liglan could move, a redhaired knight

suddenly appeared.

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jeek!

He struck at Baldazark with his Thunder Sword. The attack violently shook Baldazark's magical barrier. Baldazark was astounded.

“Who the hell is this shrimp?”

Surprisingly, Azell had ambushed Baldazark even though Baldazark had layered multiple detection magic around himself. Azell had gained Dragon Demon magic not too long ago through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. Azell let out a frightening level of energy as his consecutive attacks were let out like a storm.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

Baldazark was surrounded by his barrier as he was being pushed back. At the same time, Azell's clone appeared, and it ambushed Almarick.

“The clone has substance... A human learned how to do the Incarnation?”

Almarick was astounded. The clone had substance, and it also was able to display offensive capabilities that was almost on par with the real body for a brief amount of time. This was one of the highest class of skill in Dragon Arts. It was the ‘Incarnation’.

Azell let out a shout.

“Teacher! Get out of here!”

“Azell!”

“I can’t hold out for long. Shit! You cannot die in this place! Hurry up and go!”

Azell had already taken a significant amount of damage as he tried to save his comrades from the ruthless bombardment.

He had come to save Liglan. He had charged through the the Dragon Demon king’s Army with his body in such a state. His heart was beating like crazy as Azell used magical energy that far exceed what his body could hold. The magical energy swirled around like a hurricane. If it was someone other than Azell, the person wouldn’t have been able to handle the excess amount of magical energy. However, Azell was steering the runaway magical energy as if it was a bucking bronco. He let out fierce attacks towards the two Dragon Demon General.

“H... How dare you, you little shrimp!”

He had been caught off guard, so Baldazark was being pushed several dozen meters backwards. Baldazark raged with fury. He pulled back the barrier that had almost been shredded into rags, and at the same time, he let out a storm of magic.

However, Azell was indifferent to the attack.

Pah-hahk!

Blood fountained forth from Baldazark's shoulder. His arm was half way severed as it hung loosely at his side. His face crumpled from the pain.

“Koo-ah-ahk!”

Azell had increased his body's defense as much as possible. He just received the magical spells with his body in exchange for delivering a strike against Baldazark. Azell let out a shout as if he was vomiting blood.

“You cowards! You can't even defeat my teacher without setting up a trap! Do you really think you can stop me with these weak magic!”

Azell was a bloody mess as he continued his fierce attack. Azell's fighting spirit was incredible as he had committed his life to the attack, and Baldazark was in danger.

However, Azell wasn't fighting a single opponent.

Pah-ahhhhhhhhg!



Azell was flung away as the sound of an explosion rang out. Almarick had defeated Azell's clone, and he had attacked Azell from the side.

"I never expected to find someone like this. It seems our people in the intelligence department are blind fools."

"You won't get any answers from me. Die, you filthy bastards."

Azell gritted his teeth, and he pull up his remaining power.

His body was already at its limit. It was almost beyond his ability to stand and raise his sword. His consciousness was becoming fuzzy from the blood loss, and his muscles were screaming in protest. His internal organs had been damaged, and his entire body was begging for him to stop.

However, there was nowhere to run. He was facing the two Dragon Demon Generals, who were known as being the strongest in the Dragon Demon King's army. Azell decided to burn all of his still immature power.

'Ha ha ha. Still, isn't this a great stage for my last stand?'

He wouldn't hesitate to do this again if he could save Liglan's life. Liglan was a hero. He was like a lantern that could shine light to the people lost in this chaotic times. He couldn't die here.

It happened when Azell was having these thoughts.

“Azell.”

He heard Liglan’s voice. He was grabbing Azell’s shoulder.

Azell stared dumbfoundedly before he let out his anger.

“What are you doing! Why aren’t you running away!”

“Unfortunately, I’m not the one who should be running away.”

As he spoke, Liglan raised one of his dual swords. When he let go of Azell’s shoulder, Azell felt dizzy.

‘No way.....’

Liglan had subdued him. Liglan laughed as he saw Azell fall over.

“You are the one that has to live.”

‘What kind of nonsense is he.....’

Azell wanted to let out a string of swear words. However, he wasn’t able to. Someone picked up his fallen body.

“I’ll leave the rest to you, Rogan.”

“Does it have to be this way, Sir Liglan?”

Dragon Demon Rogan asked the question. Liglan spoke.

“I am sure of it now. He is the only one I can entrust the future to. How could I ask such a person to die in this place to save a burnt out husk like me?”

‘You are crazy, Liglan..... Rogan. Don’t listen to such nonsense...’

Azell was desperately holding onto his fading consciousness.

Those words didn’t make any sense. He was just a little bit more talented at using the sword than others. He was merely a reckless daredevil. He had no idea what to do, so he just repeatedly fought enemies that appeared in front of him.

However, Liglan was different. He was someone who lead people towards ending the Age of Darkness. He had shown Azell the way, and Azell was able to find a more meaningful place in life.

That kind of person was about to die for him.

The frank meaning behind his gesture was unavoidable. Liglan hadn’t just stopped Azell. He had calmed Azell’s magical energy, which had run wild. He had also poured in a power that would

save Azell's life.

It was the Dragon Maken.

Liglan was standing in front of the Dragon Demon Generals, but one of his dual sword wasn't a Dragon Maken anymore. He had give one of his Dragon Maken to Azell. He made it so that its power would act as a failsafe to preserving Azell's life. In such a brief amount of time, this was the only choice he could make to save Azell's life.

He had to fight two Dragon Demon Generals yet he had wasted so much power!

‘Ah.....’

His consciousness was blinking in and out. The incessant noise from his surrounding kept cutting in and out. It made him want to throw up.

“Rogan.....”

A horribly cracked voice leaked out of him.

Rogan was running with Azell in his grasp. He avoided the falling arrows and magical spells. If he couldn't avoid it, he took the damage with his back as he protected Azell.

“Don’t do this..... Let us return... We have to save my teacher...”

Rogan shouted with an emotional voice.

“Shut up!”

His voice rang out like thunder even in the din of battle. The sound assaulted Azell’s ears.

Rogan had taken the attacks instead of Azell, so he was a bloody mess. He spoke in an angry scolding tone.

“Don’t act like a child, young human. A great man like him just entrusted you with the future. Even if it feels dirty, live on to become a hero. If you don’t, you will despise yourself for the rest of your life.”

“.....”

“I don’t know if you are the vessel able to carry out this task. However... You have to prove that his evaluation of you was true. Do you understand what I’m trying to say?”

In the end, Rogan had escaped the battlefield with Azell.

Liglan had stayed behind in the trap, and he had died after gravely wounding the two Dragon Demon Generals. It took Azell

two years to be able to use the Dragon Maken given to him by Liglan. This occurred after he had made his own Dragon Maken.

# Chapter 75 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (1)

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## 1

The Dragon Demon King worshipers always moved carefully.

At one time, they were at the doorstep of controlling the world from behind the scenes. When the Nadick Empire fell, the humans were divided, and the Dragon Demon King worshipers had skilfully penetrated deep within the cracks that had formed within the ranks of the humans. They were leading the humans into darkness. They manipulated the history, and they were able to hide the important facts from the humans. They were on their way to shaping the situation to their liking.

However, the Guardian Shadow suddenly appeared out of nowhere and the Guardian Shadow had stalled their activities in their track. The Guardian Shadow used the human population as a surveillance network, and they backed the powerful Dragon Demon King worshipers into a corner.

‘Still... There are numerous ways we can avoid their detection.’

Niberis bit her lips.

It had been awhile since she had come out of the Plain of Darkness. For the past 4 month, she had confined herself as he focused on increasing her ability as a magician. Now she had

received a new mission, and she was heading towards the eastern part of the continent. She was travelling with Duran and Regina by her side.

Niberis suddenly asked a question.

“Did you hear about it, Sir Duran?”

“What are you referring to, Miss.?”

“Laura is being sent into the Rulain Kingdom.”

“Yes.”

“.....”

Niberis bit her lips.

Laura Aunsaurus.

She was the direct descendant of ‘The Goblet containing the heaven’s tears’ Aunsaurus, who had served the Dragon Demon King Atein. In terms of bloodlines, she was of lower quality compared to Niberis, who was related by blood to the Dragon Demon King Atein. However, Laura was of her generation, and she was her rival. They fought to outdo each other in terms of achievements as officials.



Niberis heard the news indicating her rival was being inserted into the region where she had failed. It frustrated her to no end. If Laura stylishly succeeded where she had failed, she would lose face.

Duran spoke.

“The mission given to Miss is very important. You are in charge of finding his whereabouts.”

“I know.”

Niberis had come to the eastern part of the continent to find a figure, who was very important to the Plain of Darkness. He went missing around 10 years ago, so no one knew whether he was dead or alive. The power vacuum created by his disappearance had caused a lot of disturbance in the inner power structure of the Plain of Darkness.

After a careful and tenacious search, they were able to find a trace of this figure. It was a dangerous region in the Eastern part of the continent. It was a place where humans and Dragon Demon worshipers dared not enter. This was why high quality individuals such as Niberis and Duran was being sent in.

Niberis spoke.

“Will Laura run into him?”

“Are you talking about the man named Azell Zestringer?”

“Yes.”

“I have no idea. Do you have any more information regarding him, Regina?”

“Once he joined up with the Dragon Sword Duke, we rarely get any information about him.”

Regina, who had been following silently, spoke up. She had been transferred to work directly under Niberis. She was able to learn surprising secret techniques at the Plain of Darkness, and her overall battle capabilities had increased significantly. Moreover, she was acknowledged for her attention to detail, so she was put in charge of receiving information and dispatching personnel.

“Currently, he is holed up in the Dukedom of Tarantos, and he continues to train. We haven’t received much information beyond that.”

“He is training.”

“It is said that the Dragon Sword Duke is giving him unfettered support.”

As Dragon Demon King worshipers, they couldn’t approach anyone under the protection of Kairen Tarantos, since he’s a member of the Guardian Shadows. There were hidden Dragon

Demon King worshipers in the Dukedom of Tarantos, but they weren't in positions where they'll be able to get quality information.

Niberis grumbled.

"I hope he does appear in front of Laura. That'll be fair."

"Miss."

"I know that my thoughts are petty. However, they are using the carefully prepared measures for Laura. It pisses me off that they'll be using such methods to divert the attention of the Guardian Shadow."

After their dream of dominating the world from the background was smashed to pieces by the Guardian Shadow, the Dragon Demon worshipers developed several methods that'll allow them to avoid detection. One of the method was to use the Dragon Slayer's Ritual as bait to mobilize a dragon.

When Niberis was given the mission to kidnap Arrieta, her organization hadn't used such extraordinary measures to help her. However, they were willing to use such carefully prepared methods to assist Laura Aunsauras. This put Niberis in a bad mood.

'Let's see how you do, Laura. I want to see how good your luck is.'

Niberis furrowed her brows when she thought about Laura's expressionless face.

## 2

He pushed himself to the extreme for 30 days, and he recovered for 10 days. Azell's training cycle had been going smoothly. He had finished his third cycle, and he had just started his 4th cycle. Today Azell was using a variety of methods to push himself to the brink.

Cheng!

Azell clashed with his clone. Accompanying the sound of an explosion, a cloud of dust rose into the air.

At the same time, Azell desperately flew backward as he tried to create distance. There had been nothing in front of him, yet something cut past the bridge of his nose, and a wound was formed.

“Huhk, huhk.....”

Azell was catching his breath as he looked at his surrounding.

He had an unobstructed view of the training ground. However, aside from the clone, Azell was acting as if there were unseen

beings was surrounding him.

“Koohk!”

Azell was moving in a flashy manner as he left behind after-shadows every time he used his Instantaneous Movement. He used the Instantaneous Movement to travel a short distance, and he made a flashy turn to change the trajectory of his movement. It was as if Azell was continuously skipping space.

However, wounds kept forming on Azell’s face and body. Something kept flying in to cut him, then....

Puh-uhng!

A magical spell flew in, and it exploded. Azell was sent flying as the sound of the explosion rang out.

Surprisingly, this was a form of Image Training. The clone in front of his eyes was given autonomous control, and it had substance. However, everything else was occurring within Azell’s mind.

Azell’s mind techniques were trained to its zenith, and he was pushing himself in various situations he had constructed. He recreated situations he had experienced during the Dragon Demon War as he fought full tilt against his clone. Others couldn’t see the entities around him, but these constructs felt like reality. It was also able to have strong physical influence on Azell’s body.

‘Shit!’

When Azell lost his posture, his clone ran in towards him. Azell was in an unfavorable position, yet he was getting ready to counterattack with a do-or-die attitude.

“Sir Azell!”

A thunderous shout rang out.

At the same time, the desperate atmosphere disappeared as if it was a dream, and the Azell’s clone disappeared. By the time Azell righted himself, the ownerless armor and sword fell to the ground.

Havanz was calling him from the estate. He was in such a hurry that he used his Dragon Demon Qi to amplify his voice. It was so loud that his voice reverberated across the mountain.

“Something terrible has happened!”

“Mmmm?”

Azell had a quizzical expression on his face. He closed his eyes as he took deep breaths. He had purposefully blurred the line between reality and the construct he created with his mind. After withdrawing the constructs, he ran towards the estate. Havanz had a hardened expression as he relayed a shocking news.

“The Dragon Demon Prince has gone missing.”

“Missing?”

“Yes. The Duke sent an urgent message to you asking for help regarding this problem...”

“Please ready the healers and magic recovery potions. Hurry.”

Azell didn't need further explanations. He headed inside.

### 3

After Seigar Weil Rulain had completed his coming of age ceremony, he was involved in around one battle per month. He was now working more in the public eyes, and his fame was increasing.

The throne wanted Seigar to take it easy, but he wouldn't listen to them.

‘I have to work hard right now to put my name out there.’

He asserted himself as he took on the work that had been meant to be shared with Arrieta.

A the same time, the troops under his direct command was rapidly increasing.

As he traveled to various parts of the country, he scouted for useful prospects, and he gave them offers to serve under him. He also advertised that he would always welcome those, who are confident in their skill. Those who looked up to the Dragon Demon Prince, and the ambitious people with no background continued to gather beneath Seigar.

He moved with about 200 people around him when he was summoned to battle. Moreover, the A and B teams rotated every time he went out. Even at such a young age, Seigar displayed the knack for gathering men, and he was able to efficiently use a budget to support the men under his command. He was talented at it.

“Still, shouldn’t you take a break soon, prince? We are fine, but you are pushing yourself too much.”

The old knight Pulmun had kept an eye on Seigar since his debut. He was an experienced knight, and he was the vice commander of the Royal Knights. He had been thinking about retiring from his post, but he went to serve under Seigar at the request of the Dragon Demon Queen. The Dragon Demon Queen was well aware of her son’s ambitions, so she determined that he needed the support of an experienced veteran.

Seigar spoke.



“Mmmm. You are right, sir Pulmun. However, I’m fine for now. I’m not that tired since only minor skirmishes have occurred recently.”

“It isn’t as if the prince’s work ends after a battle is fought.”

Two teams were being rotated, so Seigar was doing well at managing the fatigue felt by his personal troops. However, Seigar continued to go into battle without rest.

Seigar was doing so much that it was hard to think of him as a 15 year old. As he stepped up in the battlefield, he also maintained good relationships with the high nobles and various departments that supported the throne. He had a talent for politics, and he even paid attention to the business side of having an outfit. He gave only the best gears to the men serving under him. He supported his men both materially and morally.

Moreover, when he wasn’t out on the battlefields, he didn’t rest. He accepted invitations from nobles, and he went to parties to build his personal connections. This required Seigar to have incredible amount of physical energy and mental power. Seigar’s body was much sturdier than a human, but his schedule was going to sap him dry from fatigue.

Seigar let out a bitter laugh. There was still a child-like quality to his face, and one could see signs of fatigue on his face.

“I’m sorry for making you feel concerned. However, I have to do it for a little longer... At the very least, I have to maintain this pace

until the beginning of next year.”

“Why? Your reputation is already well established...”

“I want my sister to have some free time.”

“.....”

Pulmun was at a loss for words. Seigar spoke.

“I’m not saying I’ll entirely take over the role being fulfilled by my sister. I’m not that impertinent. I have a better understanding of the work she is doing.”

Originally, Seigar had thought differently. He planned on doing all the work required of the Dragon Demon royal family. He hadn’t wanted Arrieta to do any work. He wanted her to gain her happiness as a woman.

However, he soon realized that he had been too arrogant when he started to do the work. There were a lot of work required to be done by the Dragon Demon royal family, and the responsibility increased as the throne became stronger.

“The previous incident changed my sister’s mindset. She is moving incrementally towards making her own organization... I want to buy her some time until she can set up a proper system under her leadership.”

After Arrieta made Giles her personal knight, she was slowly gathering her own people. However, she wasn't as good at politics as Seigar. This was why she was gathering her people at a much slower speed.

Seigar wanted to give her some time. This was why he went on a mission meant to be given to Arrieta, and it had resulted in him overworking himself.

Pulmun shook his head from side to side.

“Prince is really... You put me to shame.”

“I'm able to do what I do, because I have all of you with me.”

“Understood. As a knight and a man, how can I stop you from fulfilling your task? I'll do my best assist you. We'll end this with no problem at all.”

They were tasked to eradicate the bandits infesting the north eastern County of Baldan.

Unusually strong Orcs were mixed in with this group of bandits, and they controlled wild animals as if they were pets. They had struck down the knights as if they were trampling reeds. Moreover, the bandits used the harsh terrains as a weapon. They moved like trained troops as they conducted a guerrilla warfare. The County of Baldan had taken massive damage from them, and

they had already tried to hire famous knights from outside their region. However, it was all for naught. Two towns had already been thoroughly pillaged. When the upper class started taking massive damage from the bandits, Count Baldan raised his two hands in surrender. He asked the throne for help.

# Chapter 76 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (2)

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Seigar spoke after he read the report.

“We don’t have much experience in fighting on mountainous terrain... This is going to be troublesome.”

“It will be. It seems we will be relying on the prince more so than usual.”

“Hmm. I’ll catch the orcs and the monsters. How come these orcs are so strong? Count Baldan invited knight Jilbaret. He is a swordsman that is quite well-known in the west. If this report is true, he was defeated without give the orcs much of a fight.”

“These orcs are much stronger than the usual ones.... It isn’t as if this is unprecedented.”

“Are you talking about Daken?”

About 30 years ago, there was an orc hero named Daken, who raised a great army of monsters called the Great Dark Alliance. This occurred at the Balan Forest where the the Western Border guards were stationed.

This particular orc was much stronger than the regular orcs, and it was as smart as a human. It had charisma, and it was able to

organize the monsters. At various times in the past, powerful mutated orcs had appeared, but Daken had been at a different level. Moreover, its power was so strong that many knights of that time had died by its hands.

Pulmun spoke.

“Yes.”

“Hmmm. Have you perhaps seen Daken yourself?”

“When the Western Border guards had been wiped out in the past, the throne had dispatched a punitive force, and I had been a part of that force.”

“What kind of orc was it?”

“It was incredibly large. It was two heads taller than other orcs, and it wore a mishmash of thick armors. It swung an enormous sword, which was large as the one prince uses. Most people died before they could get close to the orc. The bastard was like a walking tornado.”

“Interesting. I never knew such an orc existed...”

“An orc’s body is fundamentally stronger than a human’s body. Occasionally, an orc that is much stronger than other orcs is born. However, Daken was a being that had exceeded that classification. Anyways, we need to be cautious.”

“All right.”

Seigar nodded his head.

## 4

When Seigar and his direct subordinates arrived at the County of Baldan, they received a fervent reception from the people.

“Wahhhhhhh!”

“Seigar! Seigar! Seigar!”

“The noble Dragon Demon Prince’s sword will light our way!”

Count Baldan and the residents of his domain had been besieged by constant violence. In such a situation, the Dragon Demon Prince of the rising fame had come to save them. Men and women of all ages yelled out Seigar’s name.

“It seems the situation was much worse than we predicted.”

“They were barely able to harvest their crops for the winter, and their stores were plundered. Moreover, a town was burnt to the ground. The women and children were kidnapped....”

Pulmun clicked his tongue at Seigar's words. Pulmun had thought this was a minor problem with bandits. However, the County had taken such a large damage that their survivability was being threatened.

Seigar rested for the night, and he climbed up the mountain the next day. The Count scraped together more soldiers from his Domain, and they were sent with Seigar and his forces.

Seigar mused when he saw the treacherous terrain of the mountain.

“Those bastards are hiding in such a treacherous location? How are they able to conduct their raid? Wouldn't they have to traverse this terrain every time they want to reach the Count's domain?”

A troop of over hundred wouldn't be able to fight on this terrain. He now understood why Count Baldan hadn't been successful in his subjugation. However, it was almost unbelievable to think that the bandits would traverse this terrain every time they wanted to plunder a village.

“Maybe they have a secret route?”

“Even if there is such a route, it is unlikely that the residents wouldn't know about it.....”

“I guess this means we won't know anything until we run across them? Since we don't know what might happen, please be vigilant



of our surrounding. I'll scout ahead."

"What? That is a bit..."

"Regular soldiers won't be able to do a proper reconnaissance. I'll be throwing sacrificial lambs to our enemies. Isn't that right?"

"Then shouldn't we send out the knights?"

"I trust in the competence of my knights, but this is the front yard of our enemies. Moreover, I learned how to deal with such situations from my teacher."

Seigar had gone through a massive amount of training as he had been instructed by the Dragon Sword Duke Kairen Tarantos. On occasion, he was required to hunt wild animals and monsters on a frigid mountain during winter. These prior experiences would allow Seigar to make needed tactical decisions during the reconnaissance.

He would lead from the front if needed. He was conservative with how he used his men. He didn't want to send them into a place where there was a high possibility of them being slaughtered.

"Then I'll be going with you.."

"Don't over do it. If you go alongside me, the command structure would be disturbed. I'll take young knights instead of your old bones."

“I still can hold my own against the young ones.”

“However, the young ones can’t replace your experienced self. This is why I’m asking you to stay behind.”

After Seigar joked around with Pulmun, he picked out three mercenaries he had elevated to knighthood. Two of the three were veterans of many skirmishes, and they moved as they were ordered.

Seigar was cognizant of his surrounding as he moved nimbly. The knights were astonished.

“The prince was trained in reconnaissance?”

Everyone knew Seigar’s martial arts was exceptional. He had overwhelming martial power, yet he didn’t discriminate others based on their station in life. He judged a person by their ability, and he always looked at others with a fair gaze. He was a young man, yet he boldly fought in the front lines. He put his life on the line with his men, and his actions brought out loyalty from others.

Still, it was surprising to see such an ability from a person of his station, and power.

“Just a little bit. I wasn’t trained as a scout, but I was trained to be a hunter. If you see me making rookie mistakes, please point it out to me.”

“It seems we should be the one learning from you.”

“Even if you try to flatter me, I won’t easily raise your annual salary.”

They conversed in low whispers as they scouted their surrounding. Periodically, they used a communication magic tool to send back reports as the main force advanced. They advanced very carefully.

It happened at that moment.

“You are still young, yet you are very cautious.”

He heard a voice that shouldn’t be present in such a place. He heard a voice of a young woman.

Seigar raised his head in surprise. A young woman was sitting atop a steep cliff. She kept her knees together as she looked down at him.

‘I’m in danger.’

Seigar’s instinct was give a very strong warning.

It was almost surreal, since the young woman looked very out of place here.

Was she of similar age as Arrieta? She had blonde hair, and her eyes were the color of amethyst. Her skin was white as snow. She was a very beautiful young woman. She had on an expressionless face that didn't reveal any emotions. She had a doll-like beauty.

Her features didn't suit the rough terrains of the mountain, but her clothes made the dissonance even more pronounced. She wore a black dress with red trims.

Seigar asked her a question.

“Who are you?”

“I'm a magician sent to retrieve you. The conditions needed for me to reveal my name hasn't been fulfilled.”

“You are going to take me?”

“I'm merely following orders.”

Wahhhhhhhh!

Suddenly, yells erupted from his rear. Seigar was taken aback.

“What's going on?”

A report that sounded like a scream came through the magic communication tool.

-Prince! The enemies suddenly appeared!

“What? That can’t be!”

-They climbed up the ridge of the mountain, and we were ambushed without any warning! Koohk! I don’t know how this could have happened!

“Sir Pulmun! I’ll immediately…….”

-Chee-jeek! Chee-jee-jee-jeek!

The magical communication suddenly broke up. The young woman spoke to the alarmed Seigar.

“I wanted to observe good manners, so I allowed you to send a brief communication. ”

“…….”

Seigar trembled.

There hadn’t been any signs of the girl using magic. It wasn’t just that she hadn’t recited any spells or performed any hand seals.

‘I didn’t feel any magical reverberation. How can this be?’

Seigar’s magic detection ability was much more sensitive than others. However, he hadn’t felt a single ounce of magic coming from the young woman. Yet she was able to easily terminate the communication magic.

The young woman walked off the cliff as if she was walking on a flat surface. Moreover, a blue pillar of light appeared in front of her.

Woooooooooooooooooooo!

At the same time, an oppressive magical wave was swept over him. Seigar was shocked.

‘No way! Her magical energy exceeds amount possessed by teacher?’

From the young woman... No, to be precise, the oppressive magical wave that made him want to scream was being formed in front of her. This was....

‘Dragon Demon Magic!’

It wasn’t magical energy. It was Dragon Demon magic! It was a tool that emitted Dragon Demon magic. Moreover, it was emitting

an amount that far outstripped Kairen. It made his heart leap into his mouth. He had thought Kairen and his friends were the only ones able to create Dragon Weapons that possessed Dragon Demon Magic!

The young woman mumbled to herself as if she was letting out a sigh.

“Dragon Magic Device Vitan’s Glass.”

From the light, the young woman pulled out a long staff.

The staff looked as if it was carved out of ice. It was colorless, and the light distorted as it penetrated through the staff. There was something that looked like a large chalice attached at head of the staff. Some of the light that passed through the staff flowed upwards. It was a mysterious sight where it looked as if water was flowing upwards.

“Kooohk!”

For a brief moment, Seigar gawked at it, but he came to his senses. His hand moved towards the enormous sword strapped to his back. The magically spelled sheathe pushed the sword out. Seigar grasped the sword, and he got into his stance.

It was an unnatural sight. Seigar was a 15 year old young man, so his stature was small. He was only 160 cm tall. However, the weapon in his hand was a very large two handed sword, which

didn't suit him. The entire length of the sword almost matched Seigar's height, and normal people wouldn't be able to lift this weapon.

However, Seigar's physical prowess was much superior to a human, so he swung it easily.

"I call the name of the Light! Become a Dragon that tears away the evil Darkness!"

As he shouted out his spell, Dragon Demon magic exploded forth from him. The powerful light exited from the tip of his sword, and it shot towards the young woman in an erratic path.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwahk-kwahng!

The cliff exploded, and the mountain shook. Seigar let out a shout.

"You guys rejoin the main force! I'll....."

Seigar flinched from surprise in mid-sentence.

They were gone.

The three knights that had been by his side only a moment ago was nowhere to be seen.



‘Am I in a dream right now?’

Did she deceive his senses as she got rid of the knights next to him? Was such a thing possible in reality? He wondered if she used a magic that deceived his mind. Her voice was heard in Seigar’s ears.

“How unfortunate.”

“What?”

The young woman was fine as she walked through the explosion.

It seemed she hadn’t even paused in her walk. It was as if Seigar’s attack wasn’t even a hindrance. She had stepped off the cliff, and now she landed on top of a level surface.

“The blood of the Great One is flowing within you. However, you are denied power, because you lack knowledge.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’ll give you an answer at a later time.”

She ignored the confused Seigar’s question. She grabbed the hem of her skirt with one hand, and she elegantly gave a greeting.

“It seems the conditions required to tell you my name has been met. My name is Laura.”

She spoke as she raised her strange staff called the ‘Vitan’s Glass’. It was letting out Dragon Demon magic.

“I am the inheritor of the great name of Aunsauras. I welcome you to the Vitan’s Maze. Let us test if you are able to defeat me. You will have to find the exit before your power bottoms out.”

Her surrounding rippled, and Seigar’s reality started to distort like a nightmare.



# Chapter 77 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (3)

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5

‘Dragon Demon Prince Seigar Weil Rulain is missing!’

The unexpected and urgent news had put the throne of the Rulain Kingdom into a state of shock.

The throne quickly dispatched a search party with the Dragon Demon Princess Arrieta included in the group. At the same time, they sent a request for help to Kairen, since his dukedom was geographically closer to where Seigar had went missing. Kairen had left immediately after he sent a message to Azell asking for help.

Azell met up with Beorein, who was waiting for Azell in his domain. They were about to set off for the County of Baldan.

“I told Kairen to leave behind a marker as he went. We just have to follow those markers.”

Since Beorein was an Arch Mage, he could move at an incredible speed. He could maintain a flying speed of a horse galloping at full speed, and the terrain didn’t hinder him. This resulted in bringing out an unimaginable moving speed.

However, in terms of pure moving speed, he couldn't be compared to Kairen. Even though Beorein was also a Dragon Majin, he was too old, so there was a limit on how long he could maintain his high speed flight. This was the reason why Kairen had left behind Beorein.

Azell took the magic tool that would allow him to track down Kairen. It was a small platform with a needle, and it was able to point out directions.

Beorein asked him a question.

“Are you sure you are ok? You don't look like you are in a good condition.”

Azell had finished his 3rd cycle of training, and it had been 4 days since he entered his 4th cycle. He had abused his body for several days. He had pushed his body and mind to the brink today from morning to evening. He had quickly drank the magic recovery potions like water, and he had mediated to replenish his magical energy. He also received treatment from the Healers, but his condition was a mess. There were still numerous wounds all over his body that hadn't healed completely.

Azell spoke.

“I'm all right.”

He had experienced fighting in extreme situations during the

Dragon Demon War, so his current condition didn't even rise to the level of troubling him. Real battles weren't kind enough to wait for him to be in his peak condition.

“Then I'll head out first too.”

“Mmm? Shouldn't we go together? It is impossible for us to catch up to Kairen...”

“Still, it would be best if I got there quicker. Ah. Could you step back for a moment?”

“Hmmm?”

Beorein was puzzled, but he followed Azell's direction. Azell placed a spear on the floor. He got on it and he crouched on top of it. Then he created three clones.

Beorein asked him a question.

“What are you doing?”

“Please step back a little bit further. This will be dangerous.”

After saying those words, Azell took in a deep breath. One of the clones lifted the spear with Azell on it. Then the two clones stood on both sides as they created a thread of light, and the spear with Azell on it was placed on this thread. The first clone moved to the

other side to load it diagonally. The thread of light was pulled back taught as Azell's body was loaded.

“I'll be going.”

After he spoke his words, Azell gritted his teeth. At the same time, the three clones exploded. The clone holding up Azell threw his body as if it was launching a javelin, and it exploded. The clones placed on the side had made sure the maximum tension was achieved with the thread of light, and they simultaneously exploded as Azell and the spear was shot forward. The recoil propelled Azell's body into the sky at a frightening speed.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

As the sound of the explosions rang out, Azell turned into a blue streak of light as he accelerated high into the sky.

At that moment, an enormous pressure pressed in on Azell's body. If he was a normal person, his body would have been ripped into pieces.

In a flash, he was rising above the clouds. While he tolerated the violent acceleration, Azell didn't want to waste all the force in ascending the sky. He tilted the flight path as if he had just climbed over a mountain. Then he created a fierce gust of wind with his magical energy to take control of his flight path. Then he created a gradual slope to descend towards the ground. In a flash, he started accelerating, and he flew towards Kairen's direction at a frightening speed.

“.....”

Beorein was dumbfounded as he watched it all from the ground. Beorein blinked his eyes as he mumbled to himself.

“My god. What the hell just happened?”

Kairen was running like a gale. If he drew a straight line on a map, he had to cover 230 kilometres. If he moved in a hurry, he could get there in 4 hours if he ignored the terrain of the land.

He had sent a message to Azell, but Kairen didn't hold high hopes for Azell arriving on time. Since he didn't have a clear grasp of the current situation, he had to travel to the County of Baldan as soon as possible.

It happened when he was 30 kilometres from reaching the County of Baldan.

‘Mmmm?’

Kairen suddenly sensed a powerful magical resonance in the sky. Something was approaching him at incredible speed.

Hweeeeee.....!

When he looked up, a blue light was coming towards his

direction as it parted the cloudy skies. Kairen stopped running from surprise, and he unsheathed his twin swords.

However, a clear barrier formed behind the light. The blue light decelerated, and a person jumped out from within it.

Pah-aht!

The person landed in front of Kairen. Kairen was taken aback when he saw the man's red hair, which billowed like fire.

“Azell?”

“It's been awhile, duke.”

Azell grabbed the spear that fell from the sky, and he gave his greetings.

Kairen's mouth had fallen open from the absurdity of this event.

“What did you do?”

“I used my Qi to fly over here quickly.”

“No. What I'm trying to ask...”

“Let me satisfy your curiosity at a later time. We don't have time



for a leisurely conversation. Shall we go?”

“Mmm.”

When Azell pointed it out, Kairen quickly regained his senses.

Kairen spoke.

“Can we use the method you just used to cover the remaining distance?”

“One has to make constant adjustments in flight, and it is impossible for someone, who hadn’t learned the technique.”

“That is unfortunate. Also... You have a lot of wounds on your body. Are you really ok?”

“Count Michael asked me the same question before I travelled here. I’m fine. Let us depart.”

“All right. I’m going to run on full tilt, so do your best to follow after me.”

The two men started to run like the wind. Kairen once again became surprised.

‘What the hell did he do to himself?’

It had been only 4 month ago when Azell was barely able to keep up as they travelled 70 kilometres per day. Kairen was truly running at full speed, yet Azell wasn't having any difficulty keeping up with him.

‘Is it really possible to raise one’s magical energy this much in such a short amount of time?’

There were wounds all over his body, but one could tell at a glance that his body’s foundation was splendidly trained. Moreover, the magical resonance that was flowing out of him was incredibly strong. The magical resonance was comparable to the Sextuple Masters Kairen was acquainted with.

Azell asked a question as he ran.

“I was told the Dragon Demon Prince went missing, but I wasn’t given any details. What happened?”

“It isn’t as if I was given a lot of information either. The request had come with a lot of urgency.”

Kairen started to tell Azell of the information he was given.

Seigar and his men were sent to subjugate a band of bandits that was led by a powerful mutated Orc. The bandits were conducting frequent raids on the County of Baldan. Unfortunately, Seigar and his men were met with an unexpected accident. Seigar had

volunteered himself for scouting duty, and he had suddenly gone missing. On top of that, enemies attacked Seigar's troops in an ambush. They suffered heavy damage, and they almost been annihilated.

Azell furrowed his eyebrows.

"I'll have to hear a more detailed account, but.... It seems the Dragon Demon king worshippers may have intervened."

"What basis do you have for that theory?"

"We just have to look at the circumstantial evidence. There must be a reason why those bastards tried to kidnap the princess."

They still had no idea why the Dragon Demon king worshippers had wanted to kidnap Arrieta. However, the two of them were Dragon Demon Royalty, and they were siblings, who had come out of the same womb. It wasn't too much of a stretch to see why Seigar had become a target.

"However, can they actually act so overtly with the Guardian Shadows around?"

"If we consider the conditions the Guardian Shadow works under.... If the Dragon Demon worshippers really wanted to avoid the detection of the Guardian Shadows, it's not an impossible task."

The Guardian Shadow's surveillance net was an incredible weapon that could be used against their enemies. However, its reliability lessened as one travelled to the less populated locations.

Moreover, there was the problem of the people other than the Dragon Demon worshippers having to realize that they had spotted a Dragon Demon worshipper.

If the Dragon Demon king worshippers were involved in the disappearance of Seigar, they probably went through extraordinary measures to avoid that condition from being fulfilled. First, no one knew how Seigar had gone missing, and the report had no indications suggesting it was done by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Azell continued to speak.

“Moreover, the prince's personal troops didn't realize an ambush was coming. It was as if the enemies had appeared through teleportation... They are the only ones, who could pull it off.”

Seigar's personal troops had magicians, yet they had been completely fooled. Even if the Arch Mage Beorein tried to do it, it would have been impossible for him to do this feat.

However, what if it was Niberis?

In Azell's estimation, she could have done it.

She had the skills to hide even the evil intent of her troops. It wouldn't be too hard for her to fool this era's magicians and knights.

Azell queried.

“The Guardian Shadows probably knows what's going on since the Duke knows about it. How about we ask them for some support....”

Before he could finish his sentence, he started sensing an odd presence nearby.

As the two of them were running at high speed, three spirit-looking presences wearing white robes were approaching them.

Kairen clicked his tongue.

“Well, speak of the devil. They showed up awfully fast.”

“You have such sayings here too?”

“There are places that don't have it?”

Kairen came to a stop as he spoke those words. The whisper of children rang out in the surrounding, and the words were indecipherable. The being hidden within the darkness of the white robe spoke.

「Dragon Demon Prince... Kidnapped.」

「From the Plain of Darkness.....」

「High ranked Dragon Demon.....」

“Are they saying a high ranking member of the Dragon Demon king worshippers left the Plain of Darkness to kidnap Seigar?”

It was still hard to decipher what the Guardian Shadows were trying to say. The Guardian Shadows continued their whispers.

「Tracking.....」

“Do you know their location?”

「Disappeared... Flowing tears blinds our eyes.....」

「However, we followed the trace of the tears to encircle them.」

“.....”

Kairen frowned. He had no idea what they were trying to say.

However, Azell asked them with a serious expression on his face.

“When you make reference to the tears, do you mean to say the landscape is being obscured like this?”

Azell drew a shape with his finger through the empty air. A wave-like ripple occurred as the sight on the other side of the shape became distorted.

The Guardian Shadows replied.

「Correct. Flows like tears.....」

「Tears swallowed by Vitan.....」

“...when did these bastards become poets?”

Azell spoke to Kairen, who just spoke out in frustration.

“It seems a big fish might have really come out. ”

“Mmm?”

“If this characteristic they described matches with someone I know... We might have to prepare for the worst.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’ll tell you as we go. Fortunately, the Guardian Shadows are able to track them even though the enemy is taking active steps to hide their tracks. They are able to see the traces that can’t be seen by a normal person.”

Azell started running again. The Guardian Shadows whispered as they followed them.

「The Dragon is coming.....」

「It will come to test... It’ll be here.」

“What?”

Azell turned around in surprise, but the Guardian Shadows drifted farther away as if they had said everything they wanted to say. Azell marveled at this sight.

“Duke. I can’t believe you worked with them for over several dozen years.”

“If they were my subordinates, I would have re-trained them a hundred times over by putting them through hellish training.”

Kairen grumbled as he increased his speed.



# Chapter 78 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (4)

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However, they found out what those words meant not too long after they arrived at the County of Baldan.

Kah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

From dozens of kilometers away, one could hear oppressive roar ringing out. Afterward, a thunder clap illuminated the gloomy skies. After a couple seconds delay, a deafening sound of thunderclap rang out around Azell and Kairen.

Kairen was amazed.

“Dragon’s roar?”

The fearsome roar by the Dragon and the destruction that happened afterwards was akin to Azell’s power. It was similar to what happened after he used the ‘Roar of the Dragon.’

Azell spoke.

“It is a Thunder Dragon. Moreover...”

Goo-oh-oh-oh-oh-oh!

Another Dragon's roar rang out. It was happening on the other side of the mountain, but one could detect an incredible power going off.

“What are two Dragons doing here?”

“We'll know when we get there, but.....”

Azell spoked as he started running again.

“It sounds like they are fighting?”

“They are fighting each other? Aren't they a little bit too close to the human territory?”

The domain of Dragons were mostly located deep within perilous lands where human traffic was sparse. This was why it was rare for human to become scared from hearing dragons fight. The aftermath of the fight almost never had direct effect on the humans.

However, when the two of them were at a distance where they could see the County of Baldan, they realized their worries were well founded.

“Shit.”

Azell's expression crumpled.

Half of Baldan castle was in ruins as smoke rose into the air. The nearby houses were ruthlessly crushed as if a tornado had passed through. The dragons had already descended from the mountain, and they had fought a bout within the town. Then they had continued their fight as they ascended the mountain again.

Ooh-roo-roohng! Gwah-gwah-wah-wahng!

The sound of an explosion rang out from afar as thunder fell from the sky.

The clear sky of the fall night was swept over by a snowstorm,, and a portion of the mountain froze. Numerous chunks of ice impacted on the mountain as if siege ordnances were bombarding the mountain.

Azell headed towards the town regardless of what was going on. When he got there, he saw people busily moving within the ruthlessly destroyed town.

“Fuckers.”

Azell grinded his teeth. He heard children crying, and he heard the moans of the injured people. Then there was the cries of those, who lost their family members... It was a heart-rending scene.

The knights moving busily through this mess caught their eyes. Kairen grabbed one of the knights, and he asked a question..

“Are there any survivors from the knights, who accompanied the Dragon Demon Prince?”

Soon, the two men was able to meet the old knight Pulmun. The old knight had bloody bandages all over his body. Pulmun had been busily commanding his men to save the people inside the town. He gave his respects when he saw Kairen.

“You came, Dragon Sword Duke! It is a real honor to once again...”

“You don’t have go through the effort of paying useless respects to me. We don’t have the time. Every second matters right now, so I want to hear your report. Please keep it as short as possible.”

“Yes.”

Pulmun had lived as a royal knight for most of his adult life, so he had fought with Kairen several times before. He already knew about Kairen’ personality, so he had already prepared what he was going to say beforehand. He quickly conveyed the information.

Dragon Demon prince Seigar Weil Rulain was missing. While he was on reconnaissance, the communication was cut off. At the same time, the bandits led by the mutated Orc ambushed them. There were several monsters and magicians mixed in with the

bandit group. Still, no one in Pulmun's group detected their movements. Pulmun's forces lost about 70% of his forces before he was barely able to muster a retreat.

“The mutated Orc was a fearsome bastard.”

“To what degree?”

“It makes me think of Dakan. However, this one was inferior. Still, several knights attacked it, yet they weren't a match for the Orc.”

“Hmmm.”

“Their magicians were quite skilled. However, there is no way they could have approached us without giving any signs of....”

“I have a hunch on the reason behind that, so you don't have to talk about it.”

“What?”

“This isn't a suitable time for me to satisfy your curiosity. What else?”

Pulmun decided to gathered his remaining men, and they retreated to the Baldan castle. He immediately used the Baldan castle's communication magic tool to inform the throne. Then he

planned on reorganizing his remaining forces to go look for the whereabouts of Seigar. It was suicide to take his decimated group into the mountain occupied by the mutated Orc and the bandits. However, they couldn't just stay in place while Seigar was missing.

Before they could climb the mountain, thunders crashed as the mountain shook, and the dragons started to fight.

“They appeared near here. As they started to fight each other, the town was struck in the aftermath.”

Kairen let out a moan. He had no idea what was going on here.

It happened at that moment.

“I believe I can give you a more detailed account of what's going on.”

A very easy going voice that was incongruous with the current situation interjected.

A teen was walking towards them. He had on an expression that made him look as if he couldn't see the absolute horrors surrounding him. He was a blonde haired and blue-eyed teen that looked to be about 14 years old. It was Leone, the Keeper of Prophecy for the Guardian Shadows.

Azell's expression crumpled.

“You.....”

Leone let out an awkward laugh when an abundant amount of hostility was focused on him.

“You are scaring me, so please stop glaring at me.”

“How can I not glare at you?”

“Well, I do think it is a reasonable response. Still, aren’t there more important tasks at hand?”

Azell clicked his tongue. He had a debt to pay against Leone. To be exact, he had to settle with the Undead named Zeta. However, this wasn’t the time to obsess over it. Azell withdrew the energy that felt as if it was pressing down on their body. Kairen spoke.

“Why are you here?”

“I have two answers to the question. First, I was never too far away from you, sir Azell.”

“So you are stalking me. What’s the other reason?”

“There was the matter of those beings that came out of the Plain of Darkness. They had attempted to kidnap the Dragon Demon Princess. At the request of the Dragon Demon Queen, we put

Guardian Shadows near her two children. This was why we were alerted so quickly about this incident.”

“At the very least, I like the measure you guys took. Go ahead. Quickly give me an explanation. Keep it concise.”

“A Dragon Demon that exited the Plain of Darkness disappeared after taking the Dragon Demon Prince.”

“I guess it really was done by the Dragon Demon king worshippers.”

Kairen grinded his teeth.

Azell asked a question.

“Is there evidence that they came out of the Plain of Darkness??”

“We’ve faced this big shot several times. To be precise, she is the successor of a powerful figure?”

“A big shot?”

“The Goblet containing the heaven’s tears.”

“Are you perhaps talking about Aunsaurus?”



Kairen asked the question.

Aunsaurus.

During the Dragon Demon war, the Dragon Demon king had four subordinates called the Dragon Demon Generals, and Aunsaurus was one of them.

According to records, he had been able to gather all the light in existence in the sky to himself, and it allowed him to use fearsome abilities. This was why he was nicknamed, 'The Goblet containing the heaven's tears.'

Kairen furrowed his eyebrows.

"I hope you aren't trying to say he's still alive right now. I'm pretty sure he was killed by the Archmage Carlos during the Dragon Demon war."

"We even killed his heir to this power."

"What?"

"That happened only 7 years ago. We suffered incredible amount of damage from that incident."

"So who's behind Seigar's kidnapping?"

“She is an heir of an heir... Basically, she is the 3rd generation Aunsaurus. We’ve gone against her several times. She uses an incredible Magic Qi called ‘Vitan’s Chalice’....”

“It isn’t Magic Qi.”

Azell cut off Leone’s words. Leone tilted his head in confusion. Azell continued to speak with a hardened expression on his face.

“It is Dragon Demon Qi.”

“Dragon Demon Qi?”

“I don’t have the time to explain it right now. Tell me the rest of it.”

“Aunsaurus’ heir used Vitan’s Chalice to obfuscate the prince and her location. Similar phenomena happened before. I think she has the talent to make a pocket dimension. She is able to move in this state, and it leaves behind a very faint trace.”

“It is the Vitan’s Maze.”

“What is that?”

“Find out for yourself. When the Guardian Shadow expressed seeing ‘Tears’, this is what they saw. How long has the prince been inside the maze?”

“It’s been 7 hours.”

At those words, Azell asked Kairen a question.

“How is the prince’s martial prowess compared to the princess?”

“Arrieta is better in terms of technique. Seigar is stronger in terms of strength. If we consider the whole package, they are similar in ability.”

“Mmm.....”

“Why do you want to know that?”

“I’m trying to guess what kind of state the prince is in. I believe he was suppressed by the enemy, and he’s been taken captive.”

“Are you absolutely sure Seigar lost?”

“The woman from the Dragon Demon race called Niberis pretty much toyed with princess Arietta. If this woman is the heir to Aunsaurus, this person can’t be worse than Niberis. Moreover, if she was able to form the Vitan’s Maze....”

“What is the Vitan’s Maze?”

“It separates one from outside. The user of the Vitan’s Chalice is able to create and use an overwhelming advantageous pocket dimension. If the opponent possesses Dragon Demon Qi, the prince’s defeat is a given. We have to thank the Guardian Shadows. They recognized the trace left behind by the Vitan’s Chalice, and they gave pursuit. If they hadn’t, it would have been impossible to track it.”

Azell clicked his tongue. The memory of fighting Aunsauras during the Dragon Demon war was still fresh in his mind. Vitan’s Chalice had such a ridiculous ability that even Carlos had called it a bad joke. Amongst weapons that was able to generate Dragon Demon Qi, it was considered classified in the highest rank of how dangerous it was.

Azell queried.

“May you guide us to this location?”

“Of course.”

“However, don’t you have more to tell us?”

“Are you talking about the Dragons?”

“Yes.”

“We called them here.”

“What?”

Azell and Kairen was taken aback at Leone's nonchalant answer. Leone spoke.

“To be precise, we...ah... one of our comrades called the Frost Dragon here. Originally, we made a contract with it to make it fight Sir Azell. However, I never expected it to be used in this fashion.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I'm not the only Keeper of Prophecy.”

“It seems you aren't talking about those dirty Undeads.”

“Yes. Those beings do not making any decisions. It isn't their role. Any ways, the Keepers of Prophecy aren't a unified entity. We all do things our own way. One decided to test you again, so he called in a Dragon.”

“.....”

“The enemy decided to mobilize a Thunder Dragon as reserve for an unexpected situation. This resulted in the Dragons fighting each other, and this state of affair came to be.”

“Kook.....”

Azell’s patience wore out. He lifted Leone by grabbing his throat. Leone struggled.

“Kek. That hurts.”

“Do you realize the consequences of your actions? Look at this terrible sight!”

Azell’s anger was like fire. However, Leone didn’t cringe. He wasn’t afraid. He just struggled, since he couldn’t brief.

In the next moment, Azell felt a sharp killing intent, so he dodged to the side.

Hoo-oohk!

A black energy was exiting Leone’s shadow. A black sword shot out from the shadow, and Azell retreated. Leone lost his balance, but it grabbed Leone as he was falling.

<I don’t want any trouble right now.>

It was the skeleton knight wearing metal armor with ominous black-red lines crisscrossing it. It was Zeta.

Sparks ignited behind Azell's eyes when he saw Zeta.

“You bastard!”

“Ah-ooh. How violent. That was close.”

Leone massaged his neck as he grumbled. He spoke to Azell as he hid behind Zeta.

“I get why you are mad, but I'm not the one to blame. I didn't call the Frost Dragon, and I didn't order it to fight with the Thunder Dragon called here by the Dragon Demon King worshippers.”

“Take that weak excuse out of here!”

“Ha-ah.”

Leone let out a sigh. Then he spoke as he shook his head from side to side.

“Well, I'll just say what I have to say. If you go to the entrance of the mountain, there will be Guardian Shadows that'll guide you to where the Dragon Demon Prince is located at. There's a chance that the Dragon Demon Prince might disappear without a trace, so you should hurry up and get there.”

“.....”

Azell grinded his teeth as he glared at Zeta and Leone. Leone was still hiding behind Zeta. If he had his way, Azell would have destroyed Zeta, and he would have killed Leone.

Kairen grabbed Azell's shoulder.

"I fully understand your feeling, but you'll have to settle it at another time. "

"...I'll do that."

Azell and Kairen turned their body. Then they ran towards the entrance of the mountain like a gust of wind.

When Leone felt people's gazes heading towards him, he used his magic to cloak Zeta and himself. Zeta spoke as they exited the town.

<How surprising.>

"Mmm? What is?"

<That man. It'll be worth it to observe him.>

A powerful light was emitted from inside the Skeleton's eye sockets.



# Chapter 79 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (5)

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7

Azell and Kairen climbed the mountain as they were guided by the Guardian Shadows. The terrain of the mountain was rough, and on top of that, the sun had set. Even in the dark, their speed hadn't slow at all.

However, when they were halfway up the mountain, bandits hidden on superior grounds started shooting arrows at them.

“Hmmm!”

The two of them were unperturbed. They had known beforehand that the bandits were there.

Pah-pah-pah-pah-pah-pah!

The two of them swung their swords. A transparent blue force followed the path of the sword as it blocked the arrows. While the ambushing bandits were confused, Azell spoke.

“Your entire body has completely assimilated the technique for detecting the gaze of others.”

“It is a very useful technique.”

## Gaze Detection.

Before Azell went into the Lance mountain to train, Azell had taught Kairen of the method behind detecting other's gazes. There was a lot of overlap between Spirit Order and Dragon Arts, so the main concept behind the technique was easily understood by Kairen.

Moreover, Kairen had completely perfected his technique in the past 4 month. His opponents completely hid their bodies, and they didn't show any indication of life. However, they couldn't hide the fact that their 'gazes' was on him.

Kairen spoke.

"Still, these bastards are able to completely evade my eyesight. Incredible. Still, I think the one that kidnapped Seigar isn't here?"

"I guess they have a lot of high quality individuals in their ranks. Even last time, there were men who used camouflage skill comparable to this."

Azell wasn't just able to detect their gazes. He was able to read the mental waves leaking out of the ambushing men. It was natural for humans to naturally emit a mental wave when they were concentrating. Since they weren't able to hide their mental waves, these men were inferior to the Dragon's Shadow members inserted to kidnap Arrieta.

Azell and Kairen saw the enemies reload their bow, so they split up in opposite directions.

Then they ran up the cliff to attack the enemies.

Pah-ha-ha-ha-hahk!

The swords were moving like flashes of lightning, and blood was sprayed into the air. Azell and Kairen were too fast as the enemies couldn't see their movements. The men weren't even sure when they had been stabbed, but they fell as blood surged out of them.

“Why are they dying so easily?”

The magician was taken aback. He used an invisibility spell as he floated in the air. He was like the men from the Dragon's Shadow, who worked with Niberis. He was affiliated with a lower level organization. This was also the reason he wasn't well informed on what was going on. Still, he was able to catch the scent of Kairen's powerful Dragon Demon magic, so their group had been expecting the appearance of a Dragon Demon. However, the two who showed up was completely beyond their imagination.

Then.....

Puh-uhk!

A gruesome sound was heard from below.

“Uh.....?”

The magician looked down with a dumbfounded expression on his face. His stomach had been fine a moment ago, yet he found something had erupted from his stomach.

‘No. This can’t...’

It wasn’t an eruption. A sword had been thrown from the ground, and that sword had pierced through his stomach.

He tried to come up with some measure in the midst of the shock and horror he felt. However, it was too late. The sword that was planted in his body moved as if it was alive, and it was obliquely cutting open his upper body.

“Ah-ahk!”

The magician fell as he screamed, and he immediately died as he impacted on the ground.

Azell changed the direction of the sword in mid-air, and it returned to his hand.

However, this was a deception. The sword suddenly switched direction right before it could be grasped by Azell’s hand. It passed

through the boulder next to him.

“Koo-uh!”

From behind the boulder, an inhuman cry rang out. An enormous Orc immediately came flying out. It was about two heads taller than a regular orc, and it had a ruddy coloring. Its body was rippling with muscles, and blood was dripping down its chest.

Azell used telekinesis to bring his sword back to him. He looked up as he grasped his sword.

“So you are the Orc that’s purported to be the leader of the mountain bandits.”

“You bastard! You are only a weak human, yet you dare!”

“You are a dumb Orc, yet you are quite fluent in the words of men. It means you aren’t a normal one. I don’t have time. Hurry up and come at me.”

Azell glared at it. In the next moment, the Orc charged forward. It moved as fast as a Spirit Order practitioner. A human would have to use both hands to raise the enormous mace, yet it used one hand to swing its mace.

Ggwah-ahng!

The sound of an explosion rang out as the ground exploded. The rock fragments shot into the air. It was powerful enough to crush one's bones. Human knights, who boasted as being superior to other humans, were easily sent flying in the previous battle.

However, it missed. At that moment, the Orc moved its body as it swung the mace to the side.

Pah-ah-ahng!

The orc's mace collided with Azell's sword as a loud and resonant sound rang out.

Azell's sword was slender compared to the enormous mace, and it looked as if it should shatter as it absorbed a hit from the mace. However, Azell's sword was fine, and Azell didn't even budge an inch.

Azell asked the Orc in a calm voice.

"Is this all you got?"

"Koo-ooh! Bastard!"

Rage made the Orc's eyes turn the color of blood. At the same time, a powerful magical resonance poured out, and the mace started to let out a light.

Azell waited as he gave the Orc an opportunity to raise its mace. At the same time, he let his sword droop to the floor as he awoke his magic.

“Die!”

The Orc let out a yell as it brought down its shining iron mace.

At the same time, a thunder struck.

Ggah-roo-roohng! Ggwah-gwahng!

“Kooh-ooh.....?”

Suddenly, a blue light erupted in front of the Orc’s vision.

That was it.

Azell was surrounded by a blue light as he leisurely passed by the Orc. The Orc couldn’t comprehend the man’s unhurried movement, so it tried to grab the man with his hand.

At this moment, it realized something.

Its arm was gone.

No, it wasn't just its arm. Half of its upper body was charred, and it was sent flying away. Azell's sword had let out lighting, and it had cut off the arm holding the mace. As if that wasn't enough, a large chunk of its body was sent flying with it.

'This can't be.....!'

Orc was in disbelief as it fell over with its eyes wide open.

Azell didn't even look back. He started running immediately as he spoke to Kairen.

"If you took too long, I was going to help you. I guess it wasn't necessary."

Kairen had already taken care of all the enemies that had been hiding in ambush. Azell spoke.

"It stinks."

"What are you talking about?"

"That Orc smells similar to a mutated Orc I knew."

"Which mutated Orc?"

"I'll give you a more thorough explanation at a later time."



“You have a lot of things you’ll have to explain to me. Keep that in mind.”

“If this happens as I expected it to, the number of explanations I’ll have to give will mount. Let us go.”

The two men followed the Guardian Shadows as they ran.

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There were eyes that were watching the two from a very far away distance. Jaress was one of them. As a Keeper of Prophecy, he was given the codename of Omicron. Jaress clicked his tongue.

“He is very cool. He killed the Orc that troubled the knights under the Dragon Demon Prince with one blow.”

They had made sure that Azell wouldn’t be able to sense their gazes. The reason why they were able to avoid detection from Azell, who had the ability to detect gazes on him, was simple. They weren’t actually looking at him.

Including Jaress, there were four Keepers of Prophecy here, and they all had their eyes closed. A Guardian Shadow was floating in the air, and they were looking through its eyes. The Guardian Shadows had the unimaginable ability to share the information on its surveillance of the Dragon Demon King worshippers. They had the ability to see out of each other’s eyes from a far distance.

The group started to speak amongst themselves.

“Isn’t he completely different from Leone’s report?”

“A little bit of time did pass, but... It was only half a year.”

“A human could change so much in that small amount of a time?”

“I guess. At the time of your report, it was said he was very outstanding in terms of skills. I think what he showed right now just confirms that assessment.”

“Hmm. Is that how it looks through the eyes of a high rank Spirit Order Practitioner? He looked overpowering to me...”

They evaluated Azell’s martial skills. Jaress spoke.

“This is a bit different from what we planned, but we can work with this.”

“Omicron.”

“What?”

“Instead of testing Azell Zestringer, shouldn’t we be saving the Dragon Demon Prince from the Dragon Demon King worshippers?”

”

“There’s the Guardian Shadows, and Epsilon has taken out the ‘Guardian that Never Sleeps.’ I don’t see it as a problem.”

“Still.....”

“Well, let’s just observe for now. I realize the other task is more important.”

Jaress snickered as he left. When they heard Jaress’ unreliable laugh, the other Keepers of the Prophecy frowned as they looked at each other.

## 8

As Azell suspected, Laura Aunsaurus had already subdued Seigar.

Seigar was strong. However, his power was only passable in an outside world where the true techniques had been erased. Seigar had an unbelievable amount of fighting spirit for a 15 year old teen, but he wasn’t even able to harm the hem of Laura’s dress.

However, it had taken Laura a good amount of time to subdue Seigar. The cause being she wanted to take him, while causing the minimum amount of damage. It had been about two hours, since Seigar had fallen from exhausting his power.

At that moment, Laura encountered a totally unexpected problem.

‘How is this possible? ’

The Guardian Shadows were tracking her.

She had deployed her subordinates carefully in an attempt to avoid the detection of the Guardian Shadows. She had readied bandits that most wouldn't call Dragon Demon king worshipers. She used them to trick the Dragon Demon Prince to come out to a location where there weren't any witnesses.

She had been in luck when the Dragon Demon Prince separated from his party to scout. It really made her wonder if he really didn't realize how valuable he was.

In her original plan, she would have disguised herself as a human, and she would have lured Seigar out. Then she would have used Vitan's Maze on him. However, when Seigar separated from his main force, she was able to omit the middle portion of her plan. The main force was destroyed without them finding out how Seigar had gone missing.

There was no reason why the Guardian Shadows should intervene, yet they surrounded the Vitan's Maze as if they had been waiting for her.

The Vitan's Maze was a pocket dimension that severed her from

the outside world. However, the exit from this space was fixed if she decided to unravel it.

Laura had tried moving slowly for the exit, but the Guardian Shadows weren't fooled. They continued to chase after her.

‘This is getting difficult.’

As time continued to pass, the Guardian Shadows from various regions would congregate, and their number would grow. When Laura comprehended this, Laura used a hidden card she had readied.

She had called out the Thunder Dragon that was living deep within the mountain.

The Thunder Dragon was mobilized using the Dragon Slayer's Ritual as bait. The Thunder Dragon unhesitatingly attacked the Guardian Shadows. However, even then another unexpected situation occurred.

‘They brought a Dragon too?’

The Frost Dragon that lived nearby appeared, and it started to fight the Thunder Dragon.

One couldn't just snap one's fingers to get a Dragon to move. One had to negotiate beforehand. One had to agree to do the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. This was an immemorial contract, and it was

unforgivable if one lied during the negotiation.

This was the reason why the Plain of Darkness had to go into the negotiations expecting to participate in the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

It was quite possible that the Guardian Shadows predicted the kidnapping of the Dragon Demon Prince. Laura had moved with that worry in the back of her mind.

However, she had no idea how they could have prepared a Dragon too. It wasn't as if they had predicted this kidnapping. It was as if they had been sure this would occur.

‘How can this be?’

Still, she didn't feel any sense of crisis. Her role in this endeavor had pretty much ended when she suppressed Seigar. If she bought some time, the reinforcements would be here. They would get her out even if they had to sacrifice their lives. From that point, she'll go to a place where she would be able to use the legacy left behind by the Dragon Demon King Atein. She'll be able to use the ‘Road of Emptiness’ to escape her enemies.

With that thought in mind, she had been observing the outside situation, and something unexpected happened.

‘That man is.....’

The organization had taken the trouble to ready a mutated Orc,

yet the red haired man had killed it in an instant. Laura knew about the man approaching her location.

Azell Zestringer.

Niberis was the direct descendent of the Dragon Demon King, and she was Laura's rival. This mystery human was responsible for Niberis' failure.

‘That man really looks similar to that person.’

Curiosity bloomed in Laura's eyes.

# Chapter 80 – Those Who Covet The Blood Of A Royal (6)

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9

“Is this the trace left behind by the Tear?”

Kairen spoke as he looked at the location pointed out by Azell. It was located in mid-air. It looked as if a small shimmer had appeared. One could see a distorted space beyond the shimmer. It was as if water droplets was slowly descending a wall before it disappeared.

Azell spoke.

“You are correct.”

“Hmm. It seems I wouldn’t have noticed it unless I had my eyes fixed on it.”

It was a trace that was merely as big as a finger length. These traces were spaced apart at a distance of several dozen meters, and it was located in random locations. If one had no idea what to look for beforehand, it would be almost impossible to find it. This was more true since it was night, and they were in a mountain.

Azell spoke.



“It seems the User is very inexperienced.”

“Why do you say that?”

“She left behind a trace that can be detected by the eyes. Originally, it is suppose to leave behind a much smaller trace. It should be the size of a rain drop... Also, it’s supposed to disappear after a short amount of time.”

“You speak as if you have seen this before.”

“I’ve seen it.”

“.....”

Azell put on a mysterious smile, then he looked at the Guardian Shadow.

It happened at that moment.

“You aren’t suppose to go that way.”

A teen with light red hair appeared between two Guardian Shadows. He had on a haughty expression that made him look like he was from the nobility.

Azell spoke.

“I don’t know who you are, but by how protective you are of yourself, it seems you did something that deserves a beating from me.”

“I have no idea what you are talking about.”

“Don’t try to trick me with such a shoddy illusion, idiot.”

Azell’s ‘Eyes of Truth’ could see through all illusions. The teen had put an illusion over one the Guardian Shadows. It looked like the real thing, but Azell immediately saw through it.

The teen let out a whistle.

“Wow. That’s impressive. Well, it did transform in front of you, so...”

“I don’t have time to listen to you rattle on. If you have business with me, speak quickly.”

“Hmm. You have a very high-handed personality. My name is Jares. Or you can call me Omicron. I don’t really care. I am one of the Keepers of the Prophecy that is testing you.”

“A test. Does this mean you are in league with Leone?”

“Unlike me, Leone has a different opinion about you. Anyways,

we are in the process of testing you. Shouldn't you be working hard to impress us?"

"I don't give a damn about your test. I know where you are right now. If you waste any more of my time, I'll track you down, and I'll beat you up. You must think the Concealment skill of the Guardian Shadows use is infallible, but I'll give you a chance to test it out. Let us see if you can run away from me."

"Ha ha. Your bluff is outrageo...."

"You moved two steps to the side. From your perspective, you moved to the left."

"....."

Jares' expression hardened.

Azell spoke.

"Do you now believe that my words aren't a bluff? Don't ask me how I did it. This will be your last warning. Erase everything frivolous you wanted to say to me from your head. If you don't, I won't care what your organization want or intends to do.... You'll be the first one I will chase down and kill."

"Ha....."

“I see you are gathering the Guardian Shadows to your side. Are you sure they’ll be able to save you if you gather enough of them? They might be able to. If you want to face hostility from me, you should continue to waste my time.”

Azell cold expression was like a sheet of ice. He glared at the illusion created by the teen as he spoke. There was no emotion reflected in his voice, and this made it that much more terrifying.

At that moment, Azell was using a mystic technique of the Spirit Order. He was using the ‘Eyes of Truth’ to see through the illusion, and he was looking at the real body that was projecting the illusion. Then he subtly put magical energy into his voice to upset the other’s mind.

Jares raised both his hands.

“Ah. All right. I’ll do as you ask. I need you to do the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

“Right now?”

“Yes. Amongst the two fighting Dragons, the Thunder Dragon was called here by the Dragon Demon King worshippers. The Frost Dragon was called in by us. Originally, it was a Dragon prepared for you, but there was a hitch in the plan.”

“You wanted it to fight me? You were going to use the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual as a test?”

“You almost guessed it correctly. It is slightly different from that.”

Jares made an invidious remark.

Azell furrowed his eyebrows as he asked a question.

“How did you get the Dragon to move?”

“The Dragon Slayer’s Ritual was used as bait.”

“As expected.”

Jares was puzzled by Azell’s knowing attitude.

“Did you suspect it?”

“There is no other way to do it. In truth, it is a deal without much benefit, yet there are those who try to use that method.”

This tactic was also used in the Dragon Demon war. It wasn’t just used by the the Dragon Demon King’s army. It had also been used by Azell’s allies.

However, it wasn’t a smart solution, so it had rarely been used in real life.

Two problems arose from using this method.

First, one must deal with the Dragon Slayer's Ritual afterwards. A one on one fight with a Dragon wasn't recommended. In the midst of a war, it was very important to have strong personnel at one's disposal.

Secondly, one could block the Dragon Slayer's Ritual even if a Dragon was mobilized. If a qualified individual asks for the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, the Dragon always agreed to it. If this other being was able to defeat the Dragon, it would just benefit the enemy in the end.

Azell spoke.

“Well, all right. I don't care about a trash test that was planned by an idiot like you. So the essential point is you want me to use the Dragon Slayer's Ritual to kill the Thunder Dragon, and you will change the target of the Frost Dragon to the Aunsarus' heir?”

“Yes.”

“All right. I like the simplicity of the plan.”

After saying this, Azell lifted his eyes.

“I refuse.”

“What?”

“There is no reason why I should follow your instructions. If you plan on doing this next time, at the very least, you’ll have to catch a hostage to coerce me. Of course, the vengeance I’ll unleash on you guys will be that much more painful.”

“Hmm. If you continue to act this way, do you realize you might turn the Keepers of the Prophecy and the Guardian Shadows into enemies?”

“Do you really think that is an effective threat against me?”

Azell let out a snort. Then he glared at Jares with contempt in his eyes.

“I’ll give you a warning, idiot.”

At that moment, Jares’ expression crumpled from pain.

“Koohk. This is.... What the hell.....”

“Any method that allows you to ‘converse’ with others is never truly a one way street.”

All the mystic techniques of Spirit Order used the senses of humans as a medium. Whether it was magic sense, sight, hearing,

smell and taste, it was all subject to attack.

Azell saw through the illusion from the beginning. As he kept up the conversation, he found where the magic was being emitted. Then he put magical energy in his gaze and voice to cause Jares pain.

It felt as if his heart was being ripped out, so Jares fell over without even being able to scream.

Azell turned around as he spoke to Kairen.

“Let’s go.”

“Hmm. I really like you. As expected of someone I acknowledge.”

“As I see more of the Guardian Shadows, I’m of the opinion that it is a broken organization.”

“I agree.”

Azell and Kairen ignored Jares’ illusion, which was doubled over in pain, and they started walking.

It happened at that moment.

“You... You resemble him.”



A young woman's voice was heard.

At the same time, a girl that was so out of place in this rough mountain appeared by herself. She appeared above the Guardian Shadows. It was the Aunsaurus' heir, who had suppressed Seigar. It was Laura.

## 10

Laura had just exited the Vitan's Maze, and she wasn't holding the Vitan's Chalice that generated the Dragon Demon Qi. However, Azell spoke as soon as he saw her.

"It's another woman from the Dragon Demon race. Are you Aunsaurus' heir?"

"Do I look a Dragon Demon?"

Laura had an expressionless face as she tilted her head in confusion. Her outer appearance was that of a human. It was perfect. In fact, the resonance she emitted was of magic instead of Dragon Demon magic.

Kairen asked a question.

"No matter how I look at her, she looks like a human."

“She isn’t.”

“Even if we put aside her appearance, I don’t feel any Dragon Demon magic coming from her.”

At the statement, Azell spoke as he looked at Laura.

“Her horns, Dragon Demon Stone and pupil are of the same color. Since you might assume I guessed based on your eye color, I’ll give you a more detailed description. Your horns look like feathers. The horns are curved upwards.”

“...how did you recognize me?”

Laura was fascinated. However, there was no change in her expression. One couldn’t feel any humanity from her. Her countenance was that of a beautiful doll.

She let go of her disguise. The intricate illusion disappeared, and a Dragon Demon appeared.

It was as Azell had said. She had blonde hair, eyes like amethysts, porcelain-like skin, and horns that flared upwards as it looked to be a crafted item made out of amethysts. A Dragon Demon Stone was embedded on the back of her hand, and it was letting out a brilliant light of the same color.

At the same time, a powerful wave of Dragon Demon magic started to spread.

Kairen was taken aback.

“She was able to perfectly disguise such power perfectly as human magic?”

Surprisingly, Laura’s Dragon Demon magic exceeded Kairen in terms of quantity. This wasn’t the first time Kairen had met a Dragon Demon that possessed a stronger Dragon Demon magic than him. However, he couldn’t help, but be surprised by the fact that she was able to completely disguise her power as magic.

Azell spoke.

“All the Dragon Demon King worshippers are uncanny at hitting the smell of Dragon Demon magic. Did you guys develop some unique magic?”

The members of the Dragon’s Shadow and Niberis were all the same. Just their ability to hide their Dragon Demon magic was really peerless.

Laura asked him a question.

“Azell Zestringer. Am I right?”

“Correct. At least, you don’t call me that long and annoying title.”

“The man with the name seeped in sin?”

“Yes.”

“My blood relatives have very different view from.....”

“Mmmm?”

“Not all of us call Azell the man with the name seeped in sin....”

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jeek!

A blue spark suddenly erupted in front of her.

Azell had just tried an ambush attack. She had been sure Azell was in front of her yet another Azell had appeared to attack her. Laura was surprised.

“Huh? A clone?”

She had been facing him, yet he had switched places with his clone. How did she miss it?

While she was wondering this point, the Azell that had attacked

went missing. It had been a clone made using the Shadow Dance. At the same time, Azell used Instantaneous Movement to jump in.

‘Thunder Dragon’s Claw!’

The sword let out a thunder.

Gwah-roo-roong! Gwah-gwahng!

A single strike was able to rip apart Laura’s shield as if it was a piece of paper. The power couldn’t be compared to the one used in the fight against Niberis.

However, a white light appeared across the lightning that was burning up the space.

Pah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

Azell quickly turned his body to evade. When he landed on the ground, Azell let out a grumble.

“Insulation. You are very fast.”

When Azell came in for an attack, her real body was moved to a location where his sword couldn’t be reached. Then she used the Insulation magic to drain away the lightning.

Even if one considered a Dragon Demon to have a quick reaction time, it had been impossible for anyone in the past to dodge this attack unless one knew it was coming. However, Laura had seen the flow of his magic. Her actions were evidence that she had read his technique's attribute.

Laura spoke.

“Amazing.”

At the same time, a light erupted in front of her.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh!

An oppressive resonance of Dragon Demon magic was spreading outwards. Kairen was taken aback.

“What is that?”

Dragon Demon magic that exceeded most Dragon Demon erupted from the light instead of Laura. Azell narrowed his eyes.

“Vitan's Chalice... It really was left behind to his heir. I'm not sure how that's possible.”

Aunsaurus had been one of the four Dragon Demon Generals, and Dragon Magic weapon Vitan's Chalice was his pride.

During the Dragon Demon war, it had been one of the most powerful Dragon Magic weapon in existence even amongst the other powerful Dragon Magic weapon.

Its appearance was as Azell had remembered, and it was grasped in Laura's hand.

For a brief moment, Laura stared at Azell before she spoke.

“You really do look like him.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Your face is really similar to him. It is similar to the Azell Kazark in the records.”

“.....”

“Are you his descendant? I heard he didn't have any descendants, yet humans procreate so easily... Or that's what I've heard.”

“Maybe.”

Azell gave a flippant answer as he looked for Laura's weak point. However, she was holding up the Vitan's Chalice, and unlike before, he couldn't find any hole in her defense. Her Dragon Demon Magic and the Dragon Demon magic of the Vitan's Chalice resonated with each other, and an incredible pressure poured out.

Laura briefly looked at Azell before she spoke.

“I won’t fight you right now.”

“Do you really think you can do as you like? Even if you have the Vitan’s Chalice....”

Azell stopped speaking, and he jerked his head up.

“...why?”

A heavy sound rang out, and the ground shook. A large shadow on top of the mountain opened its wings, and it rose up into the air.

It was the Thunder Dragon. The Thunder Dragon had been in a fierce fight with the Frost Dragon, yet it was descending towards them with thunder wrapped around it.

Laura spoke.

“It is easy to attract a Dragon. It is easy if there is an opponent that is willing to fight with one’s life on the line.”

“Is it the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual?”



“Yes.”

Laura acknowledge the point without much fuss. Another Dragon Demon King worshipper had initiated the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual with the Frost Dragon, and the act had freed the Thunder Dragon. Laura hadn’t lost her composure, since she had been waiting for this.

“It’ll be impossible for me to face you, the Dragon Sword Duke and the Guardian Shadows. I’ll leave that to the Dragon.”

“Koohk.....!”

Azell had on an expression of dismay as Laura started distorting her surrounding space as if it was a wave. Laura disappeared without a trace in the midst of it.

At the same time, lightning erupted from the three horns of the Thunder Dragon’s head.

Gwah-roo-roo-roong! Gwah-gwah-gwahng!

The thunder strike struck the ground as it swept over everything nearby. Large dust clouds rose into the sky.

From the surrounding, a cry that was like several hundred children whispering rang out. The Guardian Shadows let out a moan as they were swept up in the lightning attack.

Azell queried in the midst of the attack.

“Are you ok, Duke?”

“Somewhat. Could you teach me that technique later? You are able so comfortable in defending against it that I feel spiteful towards you.”

Kairen had used his defensive shield to block the Dragon’s thunder strike. Azell barely used any power as he allowed the Insulation magic to redirect the thunder strike. Azell smirked.

“I will. Also, I regret to tell you this news.”

“What is it?”

“This is annoying, but I guess I’ll have to follow that idiot’s plan.”

“Somehow, it turned out that way.”

“I’ll have to leave the prince’s rescue to the Duke. I.....”

Azell glared at the Thunder Dragon that was descending the mountain using broad wing strokes.

“I have to do the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”

# Chapter 81 – The Scar Left On The World (1)

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## 1

It was during the height of the Dragon Demon war. Carlos had talked to Azell about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. He talked about both sides, the human and Dragon, who had to entered into the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

“Humans, who challenge the Dragons in their thirst for power, are like moths flying towards the flame. However... The one that is truly pitiable isn't the humans. In my opinion, it is the Dragons.”

“What nonsense are you spouting now?”

“When the Dragon Slayer's Ritual is initiated, the choice is always given to the humans.”

If a human requested for a Dragon Slayer's Ritual, the Dragons always accepted it. It didn't matter how disadvantageous the situation was. When the Dragons were born into the world, there was a thirst that tormented their souls, and they knew only one method that could quench this thirst.

This was why the Dragons always had their choices made for them.

The one who made the selection were the humans.

Wisdom and Language.

If a Dragon didn't have those two things, the Dragon could only wait until a human makes the choice for them.

“If there is a Dragon that can refuse the challenge of a human, the Dragon had already achieved its earnest wish by gaining Wisdom. However, it isn't too hard for me to imagine how much a Dragon would have to wait, and how much it would have to fight to gain it.”

A Dragon might live out its long life, and not be chosen.

It might be chosen when it is wounded or sick.

“On the other hand, humans could wait for the perfect situation, and they could even choose the site of the battle. In the end, they would only need two things. They need strength and resolve.”

“I think it is a bit much to trivialize those two requirements.”

“Of course, I'm not trying to do that. However, this is the difference between those who have a choice, and those who do not. I don't need to go into a lengthy explanation for you to know which side was heaped with the more severe fate.”

It happened in the distant past, but it was merely several years ago for Azell. In his mind, it felt as if it happened only couple months ago, and his memories randomly popped up in his mind.

For a brief moment, Azell watched the Thunder Dragon approach him.

‘However, there are times when a human is also driven into a corner where one doesn’t have a choice.’

He was in that situation right now. Azell had no choice as he had to step forward for the Dragon Slayer’s ritual.

At that moment, Kairen spoke to him.

“It is as you said to me before, Azell.”

In the past, Kairen had asked Azell about swords, and he had given Kairen an answer.

Azell had said the sword was merely a tool being used to achieve his goal. If a tool was being used, there was a chance that it might break. If the tool breaks, one shouldn’t obsess over the fact that the tool was broken. Instead, one should seek for a different method to achieve one’s goal. That was what Azell had said.

“However, the Dragon Sword is my soul. It is my life.”

“When a person invests meaning into an item, it is reasonable for the item to take on life as it becomes personified.”

Azell spoke. He treated almost all weapons as if it was a disposable tool, but he had an item that held the same significance as what Kairen described.

It was the Dragon Maken.

Kairen handed Azell one of his two Dragon Swords.

“I’ll lend you my soul. You have to win and return without fail.”

“.....”

Azell momentarily looked at him with surprised eyes. It was as Kairen had said. To him, the Dragon Sword wasn’t merely a tool. The Dragon Sword was the culmination of his life’s work, and it was basically like a clone of himself.

The fact that he was lending Azell the Dragon Sword was a big deal. Azell stared at him for a brief moment before he accepted the Dragon Sword, then he gave Kairen his own sword.

“I’ll use it with thanks.”

“I know you probably hadn’t expected to fulfil your promise to

me at this point in time. I understand. However... However, you are the only one I can entrust this task to.”

“.....”

Azell’s situation wasn’t ideal. The training period he had planned out hadn’t been completed yet. The Dragon Sword being made for him was incomplete, and his condition was a mess from pushing his body to cover this great distance.

If one considered all of this, it was extremely cruel to ask Azell to go through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. If we was able to do as he liked, Kairen wanted to stay behind and fight alongside Azell.

His feelings manifested itself on Kairen’s expression. Azell laughed when he saw ii.

“This will be enough.”

From Kairen’s perspective, he had to put the highest priority on rescuing Seigar. Even if this was a cruel request, Kairen had no choice, but to ask it of Azell.

Azell understood where Kairen was coming from. This was why he turned around before Kairen could speak any further.

“This isn’t anything knew for me. You should go save the Prince. It seems Seigar has switched roles with the Princess this time.”



“...do you really think Arrieta would be suitable playing the role of a damsel in distress?”

Kairen asked as he burst out laughing at the ridiculous idea. Azell didn't turn around as he replied.

“Still, the picture that is conjured up by her in the role is better than the prince. Isn't that so?”

“I see. Seigar that bastard. When this is all resolved, I'm going to train him mercilessly again.”

After saying those words, Kairen turned away.

Azell gripped and swung the Dragon Sword that had been loaned out to him. It was the first time he had used this sword, but it felt right in his hand. The fact that it was a well made sword contributed to this feeling, but it had more to do with the familiar energy that had been imbued within the sword.

‘Dragon Demon Magic.’

In the past, he had felt this energy every time he used his Dragon Maken. That energy was within this sword.

The Dragon Sword wasn't something that could replace a Dragon Maken, which was forged from one's own soul. Still, it was too

exquisite to just call it a mere sword.

It could self-regulate the emission of Dragon Demon Magic, and it could transform the User's magic into Dragon Demon Magic . However, this wasn't like the Dragon Maken where the the sword and the owner worked in harmony to create power.

Still, the fact that he had the Dragon Sword increased Azell's options by a lot.

“Oh Dragon.”

Azell checked through the Dragon Sword's sense, then he called out in a low voice towards the Thunder Dragon. However, his voice was amplified by magic, so his voice cut through the ruckus being made by the Thunder Dragon. His voice reached its ears.

“My name is Azell Zestringer.”

Azell brought up all the magical energy he had gained through his training, then he made a declaration.

“I challenge you do the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.”

The Thunder Dragon had been making a lot of noise as it was charging towards Azell. However, it suddenly quieted down as if everything before had been a lie. The Thunder Dragon looked to Azell as if to confirm what it had just heard. Azell slowly raised his Dragon Sword, and he got into his stance.

After a moment, the Dragon broke the stillness by nodding its head. It had accepted the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

### 3

Ooooooooooooooooooooooh!

Every time Azell's heart beat inside his chest the Rings of Life vibrated roughly as they emitted magical energy. There were five Rings of Life encompassing Azell's heart. Every single one of them had gone through the Dual Banding process.

However, if one asked Azell if this was enough, Azell would have shook his head from side to side. The amount of magic, his physical constitution, and his condition wasn't at a state where he could say it satisfied the necessary and sufficient condition for this battle.

'However, it has always been like this.'

A live battle wasn't a bout. It had been the norm for Azell to step onto the battlefield when his body was in no condition to fight. He stepped forward to fight his enemies despite the circumstances.

'Yes. It has always....'

Whether it was the past or now, it was all the same. After he

awoke from his deep sleep, he had been chased, and he had fought in his lessened state. Yet wasn't he still here?

“Thunder Dragon. This was intentional, but it seems we are fighting on pretty equal grounds. You and I are both injured....”

Azell quickly assessed the Thunder Dragon's condition.

Azell wasn't in perfect condition, but this was also true for the Thunder Dragon. Of course, it had fought a battle with the Frost Dragon until recently. Its injuries had been recovered by its incredible regeneration ability, but one could do nothing about the accumulated fatigue and the already consumed magical energy.

“I stand before you, because I also don't have much of a choice available to me.”

However, there was no pity in the Dragon's eyes. It just planned to treat this as a kill or be killed battle whether it was fair or not.

The Thunder Dragon answered Azell's words with its action.

Ggwah-roo-roohng! Ggwah-gwahng!

The Thunder Dragons were fastest in terms of attack amongst the Dragons.

Each type of Dragons handled different type of Element.

Lightning was faster than every other Elements. When the thunderclap rang out, the target would have already been fried by the lightning.

In this Thunder Dragon's lifetime, it had never met its match except other Dragons. No matter how strong the being was, it couldn't stand up to the lightning that was emitted by its horn. It used the lightning to immediately close the distance and burn the enemy.

“...Yes. I am very well acquainted with it. I would dare to say that I understand your plight better than any other human.”

However... Azell was different from any other beings it faced before.

Koo-roo-roo.....?

The Thunder Dragon was taken aback. It was sure its lightning strike had hit Azell straight on, yet it hadn't even ruffled his hair.

It was a defensive technique Azell had already used against Niberis and Laura. It was the Insulation technique. The fact that the Thunder Dragon would use lightning attacks was too predictable. He could easily defend against it.

Azell took advantage of the flustered Thunder Dragon. He charged forward. The more distance there was between them, the advantage was on the Thunder Dragon's side. He had to get to a

distance where his sword could touch it.

Ggwah-roo-roohng!      Ggwah-gwahng!      Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

The surprised Thunder Dragon let out a chain of lightning strikes. It didn't care if its body was hit by the lightning. The Thunder Dragon started emitting a storm of lightning.

The Thunder Dragon controlled the lightning. It didn't take any damage from the lightning that was emitted from the Thunder Dragon's body.

Its inner constitution was even resistant against lightning created by an enemy.

'Its preparation is faster than expected! This Dragon has some prior experience in fighting.'

The previous Earth Dragon he had fought had been a young Dragon. When its first attack was neutralized, it had been taken aback. Azell had used this opening to take down the Earth Dragon. However, the Thunder Dragon continued to attack and defend even when it ran into something it didn't understand.

The Thunder Dragon's horn was burning with a blue flame, and it was shooting out lightning towards every direction. The ground was scorched, and the lightning discharged into the air. The Thunder Dragon controlled the diffuse electricity to make a

Lightning Barrier, which burned everything it touched.

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jeek!

“Koohk!”

Azell was attempting to get closer to it, but he was being pushed outside by the influence of the barrier.

He had formed Insulation using his magical energy, but it wouldn't last much longer. If the lightning continued to encompass the whole area then there was no way he would be able to counteract it using the Insulation technique.

When Azell was pushed farther away, the Thunder Dragon immediately carpet-bombed Azell with lightning. Azell used Instantaneous Movement technique to cause confusion as to where he really was, and he approached the Thunder Dragon from its blindspot.

He repeated this process several times. From Azell's perspective, he was lacking in power and speed. If he was just a little bit more faster and stronger, he would be able to time his attack. However, the Thunder Dragon was barely able to push him out using the barrier attack.

“Mmmmm.....!”

This was already his 6th attempt. He had been rebuffed at every

try, and the Thunder Dragon continued to let out its lightning toward Azell. If one turned back the time, one would have seen the exact process be repeated multiple times. It almost created an illusion of a loop.

At that point, Azell had two choices. He could accelerate using Instantaneous Movement to escape to the side, or he could charge again after letting the lightning flow through him using Insulation.

‘This won’t do!’

Every time he was rebuffed, a huge portion of his stamina and concentration was used up. This pattern kept repeating itself, and both sides were waiting for each other to make a mistake. Since the Dragon had an enormous surplus of energy, the Dragon’s victory was almost guaranteed if this continued.

When he came to that assessment, Azell decided to use a new method.

Gwah-gwah-wahng!

Azell stood in place as he received the bombardment of lightning. Up to this point, the Thunder Dragon had been spreading out its continuous attacks, so the Thunder Dragon flinched when Azell stopped moving.

‘Those Who Eat Lightning!’



This was a much more difficult technique than the Insulation technique. One was able to use this technique only if one was sure the enemy would use a lightning strike. This technique used the Insulation technique to divert the lightning, and it allowed a portion of the lightning to be absorbed back as one's energy.

‘Convert!’

The absorbed lightning was sent along the vibration of the Rings of Life, and the lightning was changed into a power with different property. Azell had accomplished this in an instant, but it was one of the most difficult high rank Spirit Order technique. If a high Rank Spirit Order practitioner saw it, it would leave him flabbergasted.

Azell endured the assault as he refused to budge. The lightning were conducted from the top to the bottom as it grounded into the floor. Afterwards, Azell's eyes flashed as he swung his sword.

‘Earth Dragon's Charge!’

Koo-roo-roo-roong! Koo-goo-goohng!

The ground shook, and the shockwave pushed through the surface of the ground. It was akin to a shark surfacing from beneath the sea at high speeds!

Gwah-gwah-gwahng!

When it collided with the Barrier of Lightning put up by the Thunder Dragon, the entire earth was flipped over. The power that exploded from within the earth flipped over the ground that the Thunder Dragon was standing on.

It was a really surprising turn of event. One usually attacked by causing an explosion that disturbed the surface of the ground. However, Azell had turned over a localized region of earth. This was only possible if one was able to meld overwhelming strength, and an almost miraculous amount of control over one's senses.

Kah-ah-ah-ah!

The Thunder Dragon was taken aback by the unexpected attack. It had lived a long life as a Thunder Dragon, but it would have never expected such an attack was feasible. The Thunder Dragon was imposing in its size and weight. Moreover, it stood on four feet. A Dragon had a better sense of balance than a human, yet it was being flipped over on its back.

“Hoo-oohp!”

At that moment, Azell lamented deeply about his own shortcomings.

It had been the perfect opportunity. While the Thunder Dragon was in a state of panic, he should have immediately rushed in to deal the critical blow. However....

“Ooh-ooh-oohk!”

Pa-jee-jee-jee-jeek!

The lightning that was channeling through him was still discharging. The lightning gave Azell an electrifying pain, and it was escaping the control of his body as the power of the lightning was on a rampage.

“I... underestimated it.....!”

He had his past self in mind when he tried this brash move. Currently, he couldn't absorb the entirety of the Thunder Dragon's strike. In the end, the power that couldn't be absorbed and transformed was running amok inside his body. This was why he had missed the golden opportunity to attack. He had no choice, but to look at the opportunity pass by with his eyes wide open.

“Koo-ah-aht!”

Puh-uh-uhng!

Azell gathered the unruly lightnings into a single location, and he discharged it towards the sky.

“Huhk, huh-uhk, huhk.....”

He tried to gather his breath while on one knee. He had done something dumb. Wouldn't this unnecessarily deplete his reserve of power?

However, a fight was always like this. A single moment of mistake could end with the loss of one's life. He had accepted the risk, and he had gambled. The reward from the success was large, but at the same time, failure brought an equally large backlash.

Koo-goo-goo-goo.....!

In front of him, the Thunder Dragon was barely able to struggle to its feet. Its body was surrounded by blue lightning, and a fiendish silhouette was starting to rise out of its body.

# Chapter 82 – The Scar Left On The World (2)

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4

The lightning drew silhouettes in the air, and these silhouettes were dancing in the air . It was so bright and beautiful that one might become bewitched by the sight at first glance. However, these were very dangerous beings that could burn any living being that approached them.

‘Constructs!’

These were Constructs created by the Dragon. The Earth Dragon’s Constructs were made from the soil. The Thunder Dragon’s Constructs were monsters made out of lightning itself.

“So the real fight starts now.”

These particular Constructs were very troublesome to face. The Constructs were akin to the Thunder Dragon’s attack, which was the fastest amongst the Dragons. The Thunder Dragon’s Constructs attacked so fast that its speed couldn’t even be compared to the other Constructs!

Ggwah-gwahng! Ggwah-gwah-gwahng!

They were the essence of lightning. When they flew into the air, they traveled along the thread of lightning that formed when the Lightning Barrier were set up by the Thunder Dragon. They

flickered in and out, but when they decided to hit a target, they coalesced to travel along the same thread of lightning.

No matter how fast Azell was, it was impossible for him to dodge a lightning through visual cues especially when the lightning was already on its way. If he had an instant, Azell could move faster than the speed of sound, but the speed of lightning was much faster than that.

Azell desperately sensed the flow of magical energy and the energy of the lightning. In a flash, he was able to pick up on it. The Constructs of the Thunder Dragon could move unrestricted around the surrounding as it attacked. If Azell wanted to block them, he would have to read the attacks beforehand.

Pah-jee-jeek! Ggwah-gwahng!

The lightning flowers bloomed. The lightning let out by the Dragon came at Azell in vertical and diagonal lines. Constructs were born in the backwash of these attacks, and they aimed for Azell from all directions.

“Koo-oohk!”

Azell was using dazzling movements to dodge the torrent of attacks, but he had his limits. If he couldn't dodge it, he used the Insulation technique, but even that technique wasn't infallible. After avoiding the attacks using Insulation, he had to block the lightning strikes that immediately followed afterwards using his Barrier. The lightning was hitting him more frequently by the

minute. Every time the lightning hit his barrier, it felt as if the shock would eviscerate his internal organs.

There was too much of a difference between their haves and have nots. The Dragon could control the lightning as easy as breathing. The Dragon's raw power were indescribably larger than any other living organisms on this world.

On top of it all, the Dragon just needed to get a decent shot in from a distance, and the fight would be over. On the other hand, Azell had to get close to damage the Dragon, and even this task was difficult.

Humans were more advanced than Dragons in one aspect. It was techniques.

There were countless species living in this world, and humans weren't that powerful of an existence. If a human fought unarmed, the human might not even win against a trained dog. Even if a human was to fight against herbivores, the human would lose in a landslide.

However, the humans hadn't become the losers of this world.

What was the reason behind it?

Humans possessed wisdom.

They made tools to supplement their shortcomings, and they

devised ways to use these tools more effectively. Then they shared these know hows to slowly come up with exceptional techniques.

A new skill called Martial arts developed as this process was refined. This was all done so the weak could stack the deck and win against the strong.

This concept bordered on madness for the Dragons.

The Dragons had been born as the strongest beings in this world yet they were born without wisdom. They were dull-witted, so the only answer as to how a human could win against a Dragon could be only known by gaining this wisdom.

“Ha-aht!”

Azell let out a shout. He couldn't get out of the way of the lightning strike, so he absorbed it into his sword. Then he discharged the energy.

The fact that he was using such a method meant Azell had been driven into a corner. It looked as if he had reached his limit. He was barely avoiding and blocking the attacks. In the end, the Lightning Barrier spread out by the Thunder Dragon, and the Constructs had completely surrounded Azell.

Ggwah-gwah-gwahng.

Azell couldn't dodge the attacks, so he engaged his Barrier. The



attacks hit his Barrier, and Azell was sent flying. It seemed he hadn't been able to neutralize all the shock, so he was seen flying through the air as blood was spilled.

In a flash, the Thunder Dragon glared as it opened its mouth. It was sure its prey had been weakened. It didn't hesitate to use its strongest weapon in its arsenal.

At the same time, a light shone in Azell's eyes.

'Dragon's Roar! I anticipated as much!'

The Thunder Dragon was a violent and impatient being. In the first place, it had the power of lightning to instantly incinerate its enemies. So how would a word like patience be associated with such a being?

Even though it was fighting against a foe it couldn't comprehend, the Thunder Dragon didn't hesitate in its attack. It had to hit hard! It was getting more aggressive as it continued to attack.

Even if it developed numerous techniques through its experience in live battles, it couldn't change its base nature.

Azell reaffirmed this truth as he fought the Dragon.

Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!

The Dragon's Roar exploded forth.

The Lightning Barrier being used by the Thunder Dragon coalesced into a single point. It gathered around the roaring Dragon's mouth as an incredible pillar of lightning was emitted. In a flash, several hundred meter of the surrounding land burned white. After a second, an enormous cloud of dust rose into the air.

This Dragon was on a different level in terms of technique compared to the Earth Dragon Azell had fought in the Balan Forest. This Thunder Dragon was very adept at knowing how to use its power.

This was also the reason why it was doing as Azell had intended.

‘I was waiting for this!’

Even the appearance of him being cornered was part of his battle tactic. His life would end in a flash if he made a momentary mistake, but he used this fact to his advantage! He had to do this if he wanted to win against the Dragon.

Hoo-ooH-ooH-ooH-ooH!

Even as the explosion started to scatter the pillar of lightning, Azell circulated a powerful current within his body.

It was a lightning strike he couldn't block with just the Insulation technique. Even though Azell had become stronger through his

training, Azell would have died without being able to do anything by the pillar of lightning.

It would have happened if Kairen hadn't lent him the Dragon Sword.

“Thunder Dragon's.....!”

A powerful wave of Dragon Demon Magic was being emitted by the Dragon Sword. It was a power that bent reality through one's will. The Dragon Demon Magic imbued Azell with a power that allowed him to exceed his own limits.

A blinding electric light gathered and burned around the Dragon Sword that was held by Azell. By the look of it, it was clear that a part of the powerful lightning that had been generated by the Thunder Dragon was imbued into the sword.

“...Horn!”

Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng!

The sound of an explosion rang out, but the lightning had already cut through the Thunder Dragon.

The pillar of lightning exploded as the world burned white. Azell's magical energy was lower than what he had possessed at the Balan Forest when he defeated the Earth Dragon. However, he had just took in the Thunder Dragon's lightning attack, and he had

sent it back after amplifying it. This strike exceeded the strike he had used against the Earth Dragon.

However, Azell didn't stop there. He immediately jumped into the lightning that had just exploded forth.

Pah-hak!

The sound of flesh being ripped apart was heard as blood fountained into the air. The Dragon let out a cry of pain.

Kyahhhhhh!

Surprisingly, the Thunder Dragon was still alive. This was the strike that had ended the life of the Earth Dragon, yet it looked almost unharmed from the previous attack.

It was to be expected. The Thunder Dragon treated lightning that fell in a storm as nourishment. Even if a strike could part a mountain, it wouldn't receive any damage if the attack was lightning based.

Azell was well aware of this fact. However, he had used the Thunder Dragon's own technique to put into a state of panic.

"This gamble... I am the winner!"

After letting out the Dragon's Roar, the Thunder Dragon received

a strike that it could have never predicted. The power that protected its power diminished as its mind was in a defenseless state. It suffered an attack to a vulnerable spot.

“Ha-ah-ah-ah-ah!”

The Dragon was swept up by exquisite pain, and Azell pulled up all his strength to attack before the Dragon’s mind returned to its normal state.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

After consecutive sounds of explosion rang out, blood sprayed out from the Dragon’s body. Something was wrong. It couldn’t do something that it should be able to do.

It couldn’t stop itself from bleeding.

It wasn’t as if Azell had attacked the same location. Its initial wound should have stopped bleeding through regeneration. However, the wound continued to widen as blood continued to pour out.

“Blame the Duke. If it wasn’t for this sword, it would have been my loss!”

Azell had used a Hemorrhagic Curse that worked even on a Dragon. Azell was being backed up by plenty of Dragon Demon Magic, so he was able to use this technique. Moreover, Kairen’s

Dragon Sword made this attack possible.

However, its bleeding wasn't the only strange occurrence that created confusion within the Thunder Dragon.

Pah-hahk! Pah-hah-hak!

There wasn't only one sword hitting its body.

Numerous sword strikes were parting its body at the same time.

It felt as if several dozen humans were attacking it. However, it knew that wasn't possible. It was performing the Dragon Slayer's Ritual with the single human, who was in front of it!

'Dance of the Shadows!'

In that moment, Azell created several dozen clones that had the substance of his real body, and they all charged towards the Thunder Dargon.

The Hemorrhagic Curse could only be used by Azell's real body. However, the sword strikes all over its body could still cause damage. The Thunder Dragon didn't know what to do as pain washed over it.

Kah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

The Thunder Dragon let out lightning in a frantic attempt. However, it was useless. Azell possessed a devilish timing. He attacked right when the lightning was emitted. The pain caused the concentration of the Thunder Dragon to falter, and the weakened lightning strike was badly aimed.

It had made a mistake in using the Dragon's Roar through its impatience. It didn't have time to recharge its power, and death was approaching it.

Ba-dum! Ba-dum! Ba-dum!

Azell's heart was beating crazily, and a frightening amount of magical energy was generated.

At that moment, Azell charged towards the Thunder Dragon as if his soul was behind his attack. This was the decisive moment that would determine the outcome of this battle. He had to kill the Thunder Dragon before the power used up by the Dragon's Roar returned. If he was able to do it, it was Azell's victory. If he couldn't do it, Azell would be dead!

"Flame Dragon's.....!"

The Dragon's mind was clouded from the massive blood loss, and Azell suddenly burst into view in front of the Thunder Dragon's eyes. The terrifying blue eyes looked down at the Dragon, and flame erupted from his body like an active volcano.

“...Horn!”

Then he brought down his burning sword down on the crown of the Dragon’s head.

## 5

“...my god. How can he dispatch a Dragon so easily?”

The Keepers of the Prophecy was taken aback as they watched Azell and the Thunder Dragon conduct the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

They were well aware of how frightening of an existence a Dragon was. This was quite apparent since the surrounding landscape was being rearranged by the fight between the Thunder Dragon and Azell.

However, Azell had defeated the Dragon very handily. If one knew the inside story, one would have found out that Azell had stolen the victory through a gamble. It had been a gamble with his life as a collateral. However, these beings didn’t know the inside circumstances, so his victory looked unbelievably simple.

Was he really the same person that impotently lost to Zeta only 4 months ago?

“Maybe he really is the figure mentioned in the Prophecy.”



One of the Keeper of Prophecy spoke.

Leone was also surprised. This fight hadn't been planned. Of course, the Frost Dragon hadn't been mobilized to be used at this point in time. Still, it was a card they had prepared, so the Frost Dragon could be mobilized any point in time. However, they had to use prematurely use the Frost Dragon, because of machination of the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

Leone asked a question.

“What would happen if you fight him now, Zeta?”

<I don't know. I can't guarantee anything.>

“Are you able to win against a Dragon, Zeta?”

<It is possible. However.....>

Zeta wasn't confident he could do it like Azell. When he was alive, he had been known as a genius and an expert as a Spirit Order Practitioner. However, when he face Azell before, he had been outclassed by Azell in terms of techniques. Yet this man now had matured in power up to a point where he could defeat a Dragon in a one on one battle. Will he really be able to defeat him?

Leone spoke.

“Jares. Sometimes your harebrained schemes are useful.”

Jares was struggling like a bug beside Leone’s feet.

“Koo-oohk. Shit. If you are going to give me a compliment, you should.... Why don’t you speak in a more agreeable tone?”

Jares was letting out cold sweat as he laughed. The pain given to him by Azell was quite terrible. His body was still struggling from the pain.

Leone furrowed his eyebrows.

“You should pick one reaction. Either you can be in pain or you can put on a smile of victory. You look creepy right now.”

“Kook-kook-kook, The man called Azell.... His actions have more bite than expected, but in the end... He is a virtuous man. If he is such a man, he can’t help, but choose this course of action.”

“You just dropped a line that would be spoken by a real villain. Well, I guess you are a trash that is worse than a villain.”

“We are all the same.”

“It is annoying, but I have no basis to refute your words. Anyways, I’m really starting to think he is the one being pointed out by the Prophecy.”

“Kook-kook-kook.....”

Jares was still crumpled on the floor as he he let out a dark laughter.

Leone spoke. He looked at Jares as if he was an idiot.

“It seems Theta and Delta is doing well.”

## Chapter 83 – The Scar Left On The World (3)

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While Azell was conducting the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, Kairen chased after Laura.

He was chasing after her by himself, and he lost her trail when she hid herself inside Vitan's Maze. Fortunately, the Guardian Shadows were able to pick up on her whereabouts again.

Then.....

<Hmm. Legendary runt. I used my artistic sense to decorate your eyes, but now it is back to its mundane appearance.>

"I neatly cleansed your ugly looking Skeleton, yet it seems it has become dirty again."

Kairen growled.

The one making the sarcastic remarks as soon as it saw Kairen was the Dragon Demon Undead named Delta. It was allied with the Keepers of Prophecy. Its skull was crushed in the fight against Kairen, but it arrived to battle Laura after it had recovered its original appearance.

<We don't have the luxury to unnecessarily squabble over our feelings.>

The one to speak in such an annoyed tone was the Undead Magician Theta. Kairen grumbled.

“Hey, Skeleton Magician. Can’t you tell me if I’m in a nightmare or not? Then maybe I’ll have some impetuous to be more thankful towards you.”

<You should try biting your tongue to see if you are of right mind. You are fighting in a united front with the dirty Undeads. That is an undeniable reality.>

“Shit.”

<You’ve lived for a pretty long time, yet you haven’t experienced this before. You should be more accepting of these new emotions. It is best to have a flexible mind in regards to this arrangement.>

“You are an annoying bastard.”

<What a very unoriginal assessment.>

From Kairen’s perspective, he was really annoyed, but he couldn’t deny the fact that Delta and Theta were reliable allies. This was especially true of Theta. If it wasn’t for Theta’s magic, he would have already lost Laura.

“You guys are really persistent.”

Laura let out a sigh. She was clearly vexed by all of this.

However, one could feel a sense of danger coming from within her.

‘I never expected him to attempt the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.’

She had planned on escaping, while letting the Thunder Dragon deal with most of her pursuers. However, her plan had gone awry. This was especially true in regards to Azell. He had occupied the Thunder Dragon by using the Dragon Slayer’s ritual. This possibility was completely outside of her calculations.

Still, did he really have the requisite power to face off against it?

Before Kairen had arrived, Theta, Delta and several other Guardian Shadows had surrounded her, and they sent fierce attacks towards her. She hadn’t been able to travel very far when Kairen suddenly appeared. He had sent an attack towards her without a moment’s notice.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

Everything looked as if it was burning bright. Afterwards, Kairen struck atop her barrier.

The barrier shook violently. Kairen’s attack was so fierce that it made her blood run cold.

‘As it stands now, I’ll be in danger.’

She had been completely wrong in her calculations. There were too many strong enemies for her to fight and defeat them. She was well-informed of these beings. Aside from Kairen, these two Undeads were beings that had been killed in a fight with Laura’s predecessor.

Basically, they were Laura’s sworn enemies, but it didn’t rise to a threshold where she held a bitter resentment against them.

In the first place, Laura didn’t hold any affection towards the previous heir of Aunsaurus.

‘During that fight, all the members of this organization hadn’t gathered in a single location... Moreover, the Dragon Sword Duke is also formidable.’

As she was having these thoughts, she was exchanging attacks in the fierce battle. Laura was using all kinds of magic in an attempt to escape this place.

However, the encirclement by her enemies was too sturdy. About half of her magic was being offset by Theta. While the Guardian Shadows annoyed her by attempting to slow her down, Kairen and Delta rushed in close to hit her with terrifying sword strikes.

‘What should I do?’

It wasn't as if she didn't have any methods that'll allow her to escape from this place.

She just had to withdraw the Vitan's Maze being used to imprison Seigar. She had to turn the full ability of the Vitan's Chalice towards her enemies. However, that would cause her to fail her mission.

‘I don't want that to happen.....’

Her head knew which choice was sensible. If one considered the merits she had accrued until now, a single failure wouldn't cause too much harm to her. Wasn't this something even her rival, Niberis, had failed?

“If I do fail, I'll be fine.”

Laura mumbled to herself as if she was convincing herself. Yes. It'll be alright if she failed. The right move was to concede Segiar to them, so she could get out of here safely.

However, there was a stuffy feeling at the corner of her chest as if there was an obstruction.

‘It won't be too late to give them a name after we sort them out.’

When she was young, she didn't know much about the world,



and she hadn't received her name of Laura yet. She remembered the adults speaking as they coldly looked down at her. Their eyes had looked at her as if they were judging the worth of an item.

‘Only those who don't fail will be given a name. We don't need failures.’

She always heard a variation of those words. Laura had once been pitted against the children for the seat of being an heir. Those who failed were weeded out through natural selection. They only wanted the children, who achieved results. Only these select children were given names.

The children, who were weeded out, disappeared from this world. The children were tools that would be used to achieve their earnest wish. This was why many children were ‘produced’, and only those that met the requirements were left alive.

“Ooh-oohk.....!”

This was the first time there was a change to Laura's expressionless face.

She made a sensible and cool judgement. She decided to give up on this mission. Her well-being had to be prioritized. This was suppose to be a simple decision.

However, a wound had been engraved into her mind starting from her childhood, and it was getting in the way of her making

this simple choice.

Kwah-ha-ha-haht!

Her barrier was cut open. While her concentration was faltering, Delta and Kairen used the opportunity to focus their attacks on a single point.

“Kyahhhhk!”

Laura let out a scream. Her sturdy barrier was broken, and her long dress was torn.

“You are having idle thoughts during a battle. You must be overflowing with confidence, Miss!”

This was the perfect opportunity. Laura had been flung away. Kairen stormed in front of her, and he unhesitatingly brought his sword down. This would be the end for her!

At that moment, a light exploded in front of his eyes.

“What?!”

Kairen was shocked. The light hadn't caused him any harm. His vision was momentarily obstructed, but he didn't suffer any physical damage.

However, he didn't feel anything at the end of his sword. He capitalized on the perfect opportunity, yet his sword had swung down on empty air.

“Ha-ahhhhh.....”

Laura was letting out a deep sigh in front of him.

At that moment, Kairen couldn't believe his eyes. The light had ignited in front of him, but he had closed his eyes instantly. He hadn't been blinded by the light. However, the sight in front of his eyes were distorted as if he was seeing a heat shimmer in an early summer day.

Theta spoke.

<It is a distortion of space.>

Vitan's Chalice gathered the light from the sky, and it was a tool that distorted the space. The distortion of space could be used to create a completely secluded space. It was also possible to cause a local distortion of space other than creating the 'Vitan's Maze'.

Moments ago, Laura was in a desperate situation, so she had created a distortion in space. Kairen was accurate in his strike, but the distortion made him cut through empty air.

“I failed.....”

A pale-faced Laura mumbled to herself.

She had created a distortion in space, and at the same time, the Vitan's Maze had been broken. Azell's assessment was spot on. Laura was still inexperienced in using the Vitan's Chalice. She couldn't maintain the Vitan's Maze and cause a distortion in space at the same time.

The unconscious Seigar was on the floor next to her.

“Seigar!”

Kairen yelled out in surprised. However, Seigar had lost complete consciousness. He didn't respond to Kairen's words.

Suddenly, Laura spoke.

“Since things turned out like this, it would have been great if he followed me.”

Light was emanating far in the distance. A powerful surge of Dragon Demon magic was felt a beat later.

Woooooooooooooooooooo.....

The air was shaking slightly. In the midst of a battle, Laura, Kairen, Delta and Theta all looked backwards. This wasn't the

time to take one's eyes from one's opponent, but the wave of Dragon Demon Magic that swept over them from the back had been too powerful.

Laura mumbled to herself.

“In the end, he slayed the Dragon. Azell Zestringer. Maybe you are... Maybe you are descended from the one, who saved the world from the King's Destiny.”

“What did you just say?”

He had never expected to hear such words from her. Kairen turned around to look at her in surprise. However, instead of giving an answer, she lifted Seigar with her magic.

“I was able to come to a decision regarding this failure thanks to you, Dragon Sword Duke.”

As she spoke those words, she waved her hand once. Seigar's body was flung towards the wrong direction, and he started to fall off a cliff.

“Shit!”

Kairen unhesitatingly threw his body off the cliff to follow after Seigar. No, he didn't just throw himself off the cliff. He was running down the cliff. He couldn't use his movement skills if he didn't have any place to step on.

When Kairen was sent away from her, Laura moved her body. Of course, Theta and Delta wouldn't just standby as she ran away.

They immediately ran towards her, but....

“Bye now.”

As if she had been waiting for them to move, the distortion of space was used to flip the space. They had been running full force towards her, but they were now running in the opposite direction as her. When they realized this fact, Laura had already hidden herself with magic, and she exited the location at high speed.

“Shit!”

The angry Guardian Shadows started to chase after her.

## 7

Azell started to slowly open his eyes as the light surrounding him was dimming.

The Dragon Slayer's ritual was over. The defeated Thunder Dragon had offered everything it had to the winner, Azell.

Azell momentarily closed his eyes, and he felt the Dragon's power

permeate his body. He could feel it. The enormous power he had taken from the Dragon was twitching within him.

If he wanted to digest all this power, he would need a good amount of time. However, at that moment, he was full of energy as if his body's previous state had been a lie. All his wounds had healed, and the magical energy he had consumed to the extreme was now full.

“Now I should....”

If he had his way, he wanted to immediately go into meditation to digest this power. He wanted to give this task his full attention. However, he didn't have the luxury to do that.

It was at that moment. Azell let out his killing intent as he asked a question.

“...are you so eager to die?”

The Keeper of Prophecy Leone had appeared in front of him. Unlike Jares, he had come here with his true body.

“No. I just wanted to let you know that you don't have to be in a hurry any more.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“We lost the Aunsaurus’ heir. However, we were able to rescue the Dragon Demon Prince.”

“I see. At the very least, you doused the most immediate fire. I guess it is time for me to solve a personal business now.”

“What personal business are you talking about?”

“You should immediately send out the bastard called Zeta. I’ll destroy him. Then I’ll go after Jares next. I’ll make it so that he won’t be able to think about doing this ever again.”

“About Jares.... Hmmm. I won’t defend that runt’s action, but.....”

“Runt?”

Azell’s eyes opened wide. Leone spoke.

“Ah. I may look like this, but I’m much older than you, sir Azell.”

“What do you mean?”

“When one becomes a Keeper of the Prophecy, it means you forfeit your life of living as a human. I was born during the Great Darkness.”



Azell swallowed his breath when he heard those words. It was hard to believe his story. If he was born during the Great Darkness, wasn't he at the very least an old man over 60?

“You aren't a Dragon Demon or a Dragon Majin.... Does this mean you avoided the flow of time for all these years?”

“Yes. However, you don't have to treat me like an old man. I've already thrown away my past.”

Leone was speaking about an incredible story, yet he was smiling brightly. Azell was temporarily at a loss for words, so Leone spoke.

“Then I'll return to talking about Jares. I fully understand sir Azell's feelings, but his unnecessary method hatched a good result for you. May you take that fact into consideration?”

“Birds of a feather flock together. You are only looking at the result.”

It was true that the Frost Dragon was used to lure away the Dragon Demon King worshippers. This in turn allowed him to block the Thunder Dragon. However, if Azell thought about the original reason why Jares had prepared the Frost Dragon, he couldn't forgive Jares.

“I see. Well, that is too bad. It seems Jares will have to look out for his own life.”

“I think it’ll be more convenient for me to torture you. It’ll prompt him to show up in front of me.”

“Unfortunately, we aren’t tied to each other through affection. We all prioritize our own safety over others.”

“You guys are trash.”

“I won’t deny that fact. However, the reason behind our choices may differ from what you are thinking, sir Azell.”

“What do you mean?”

“There is a reason why we emphasise putting our own safety above all others. Our lives are a tool being used to achieve our earnest wish. The Keepers of Prophecy gave up our lives as humans by choice. We are now the tools being used to eradicate the Dragon Demon King worshippers.”

“So this is why you are suddenly a bit more free with the information you offer. This is why you continue to flap your lips. You want me to feel pity towards you. Do you expect me to sympathize with you guys?”

“We never considered such a thing. We assessed that there was a high chance that you are the person mentioned in the prophecy. This is the only reason why we are being more cooperative with you.”

“However, I have no plans to cooperate with you.”

“If you are able to destroy the Dragon Demon worshippers, then that is the best kind of cooperation you can give.”

It didn't matter what words were said. Leone kept smiling, and his face was really like a mask. Azell furrowed his brows as he spoke.

“Well, all right. I'll hunt down Jares myself, and I'll make him suffer. Give me the bastard called Zeta.”

“I refuse.”

“What did you just say?”

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“It is useless to test you through Zeta anymore.”

“Ho-oh? I thought you said you only look out for yourself? Or do you think I’m not capable of killing you too?”

“In my opinion, I don’t think you will.”

“...I would have understood it if you are really a child. However, you are acting like a black-hearted old man.”

Leone’s eyes widened. He could barely see Azell’s movement as a sword was aimed at Leone’s throat. Azell was so fast that it looked as if time had stopped for a brief moment. It was as if Leone couldn’t pick up what had happened in between.

However, Leone continued to smile even in such circumstances.

“You can take out your anger on me. I’ll accept it, but you won’t kill me.”

“.....”

Azell grinded his teeth.

‘This bastard... He isn’t bluffing.’

Azell realized it when he saw Leone's eyes. This bastard meant what he said. It was as if he didn't believe that Azell would do such an act. He wasn't saying this with determination or fear.

His eyes really said he didn't care what happened. Azell might be the person they are looking for, so he would accept Azell's retaliation....

In the end, Azell lowered his sword.

“What is this Prophecy you keep talking about?”

“He is a human yet he possesses Dragon Demon Magic. He is the bowl that will be filled with the Great Power, and he will fulfil your most earnest wish.”

The Prophecy was very short.

The Keepers of the Prophecy's earnest wish was for the Dragon Demon King worshippers to be wiped out. They had given up their lives as humans to see it come true. They had become a part of the Guardian Shadows.

Azell asked a question.

“A bowl that will be filled with a Great Power? What do you mean by that?”

“We aren’t at the point where we can tell you more about it. We’ll probably tell you when we receive confirmation that you are the one.”

“So you’ll tell me when you confirm that I’m the person that is prophesied to bring the end to the Dragon Demon King?”

“Yes.”

“How can you confirm such a thing?”

“That we do not know.”

“.....”

“You can look at me that way, but I’m not lying. In truth, we also don’t know much.”

“The Guardian Shadows are a real mess of an organization. It seems there are a lot of Keepers of Prophecy. I thought there would at least be a hierarchy amongst you guys. I’m guessing there isn’t one?”

“Not really. For example, we have no idea what criteria was used in selecting us as the Keepers of Prophecy. We just know we were chosen, and we accepted it. From that moment on, we were like newly born beings that just learned how to breathe. We

instinctively knew what to do, and we merely acted on those instincts.”

“What?”

Azell was dumbfounded. Leone shrugged his shoulders.

“I know about the process in becoming a Guardian Shadow. However, I don’t have much information in regards to how a Keeper of Prophecy is chosen.”

“If one wants to become a member of the Guardian Shadows... I was told that another Guardian Shadow has to choose you.”

“Ah. This is what I just spoke to you about. It is the process in how one becomes a Guardian Shadow.”

“Huh?”

“The members of the organization called the Guardian Shadows chooses the other Guardian Shadows. Basically, they are given a choice.”

The sound of a children whispering was heard, and at the same time, the ghostly Guardian Shadows started to appear. There was someone with a small stature like a child, there was someone with a bent back like an old man, there was someone with a stature of a giant, there was a someone that was fat.... A variety of silhouettes formed, but they all shared the same appearance as they circled

around Leone.

Leone looked at them as he told Azell a secret.

“The Guardian Shadows were all humans once.”

“They were humans once?”

Azell was surprised. Maybe he should have expected it. However, the Guardian Shadows had been too alien for him to think of them as former humans.

Azell looked at variety shapes of humans.

Magic and Spirit Order techniques could be used to alter a human. There were living beings, who chose to change until they became monsters. Then there were those who became Undeads in death.

However, the alterations seen by Azell in the past didn't resemble anything to the Guardian Shadows. In some ways, they looked like spirits without bodies. In some other aspects, they resembled the Undead. However, they were neither of the two. One couldn't feel evil energy from them, yet they didn't have true forms. They were strange beings. It was as if they were living between this world and another.

“There used to be a great magician in the past. Mmm. There might have been couple more magicians, but in the story I was



told, there was only one.”

Leone was talking about the origins of the Guardian Shadows. Azell had seen numerous magic in the Dragon Demon War. He had witnessed the greatest mysteries of these magic, yet he couldn't wrap his mind around the Guardian Shadows. How was such an organization born?

“He opposed Dragon Demon King Atein, and the people who worshipped him. He wanted to fight those that were manipulating the situation of the world from behind the curtain. However, even if he did possess incredible magic, he didn't have enough power to fight all of them.”

This was why the great magician had come up with this method.

He couldn't stop all of them by himself. He couldn't just simply create an organization... He decided to gather the power of more people. The Dragon Demon Worshipers built a relationship of cooperation based on their worship for the Dragon Demon King. He wanted to something akin to that. He needed people that wouldn't calculate the gains and losses. He needed beings that would cooperate on the pure desire of obstructing the Dragon Demon King and his worshippers.

“Basically, he picked beings that held a grudge against the Dragon Demon King worshippers that couldn't be washed away.”

However, there had been a problem. Normally, those with that much enmity against the Dragon Demon King worshippers were

already all dead. The Dragon Demon King worshippers were obsessed with keeping their secrets. The easiest way to keep a secret is to dispose of all the witnesses.

“This was why he didn’t recruit the living. He found willing allies in the dead.”

This was how this great magic was completed. If other magicians were told what he was doing, they would have said it was impossible to do. This was a massive magical spell that would encompass every person in this world.

“This magic is basically called the Guardian Shadow.”

There had been souls of the dead where the enmity against the Dragon Demon King worshippers couldn’t be washed away. The souls was confronted with the essence of this magic, and they were given a choice. They could either pass on to the land of the dead or they could give up the peace of the afterlife. They could become a part of the magic, and they could fight against the Dragon Demon King worshippers until the end of the world.

The Guardian Shadows were the souls, who picked the latter choice.

“Do you really want me to believe such a story?”

Azell was struck dumb. If he looked back on the Dragon Demon war, his enemies and allies had used almost calamity-level magic.

The land over a town, which supported a thousand people, were turned to the land of the dead. All the living beings were infected with a magical infectious disease, and it turned the living beings into Undeads. Such evil miracles had occurred before.

However, even if Azell used the standard of magic that had been used during that time, this was preposterous.

Leone spoke.

“I’m also a magician, so I know my words sound absurd. However... There is one dream that every magician possesses.”

A cataclysmic event had forever left a scar on this world.

When Carlos was being full of himself, he used to repeat his desire to achieve this very same dream. It was the ultimate task all magicians worked towards solving.

It was passed down that the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual and the common language between people were the result of fulfilling this desire.

If one thought in those terms, the magic that had formed as the Guardian Shadows didn’t seem impossible.

“Through the long history of magic, the knowledge and techniques were passed down, and there were beings that rose above those past knowledge. They were able to create miracles.

The Guardian Shadows is one of these miraculous feats. This was the information that had been passed down amongst us.”

“.....”

Azell was at a loss for words when Leone revealed the origins of the Guardian Shadows.

## 8

Jares was far away as he synced his vision with a Guardian Shadow next to Leone. He furrowed his brows as he mumbled to himself.

“I had this thought from the beginning, but... He really looks like someone I know.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I don’t have much of my memories left, but...”

Jares went over his memories when he heard his comrade’s question.

When one became a Keeper of Prophecy, one looked like a human, but one had given up everything that made one be a human. They weren’t affected by the passage of time, and the

Keepers of the Prophecy always maintained their original appearance. They didn't age or get sick. They didn't die unless they were murdered.

In a way, they were the manifestation of the desire for humanity to live forever. Of course, they had given up being humans, so they had also given up the advantages of being humans that allowed them to enjoy their life.

They were beings that were gripped by their most powerful memory. They had enmity against the Dragon Demon King worshippers that couldn't be washed away. This memory was embedded like a curse, and it wrapped itself around their minds. It wouldn't let them go. Any other memories unrelated to that one became fuzzy. The other memories were like heat shimmers in a summer day. The memories disappeared across the fog in their mind.

Even amongst the Keepers of the Prophecy, Jares had lost the most memories.

He knew he was of noble birth, so he maintained his prideful attitude. However, he had lost all his memories from childhood. Currently, he only had a vague sense that he had a father, mother, older brother and a little sister. However, he couldn't even remember their faces.

At time, he thought about them, and it drove him nuts. He could remember some of the memories he had with them. He could remember someone of the precious feelings he had felt... However, he couldn't remember their faces, no matter what methods he

used.

“Azell Zestringer. I’ve seen that man before.”

Jares furrowed his brow.

He couldn’t even remember his precious family, yet how could he feel as if he had see Azell’s face? Was he mistaken? It couldn’t be. When they first went to greet Azell, there was a voice in the back of his mind that kept speaking to him.

‘This is something important. I can’t let this go. I must not pass this by.’

Jares put a big importance on his intuition. It had never ended well when he ignored such a feeling.

At that moment, another Keeper of Prophecy spoke.

“I think I know what you are thinking about.”

“Mmmm? What are you talking about?”

“Portrait.”

He also closed his eyes to get a closer look at Azell’s face.

“He looks very similar to the portrait of the hero Azell Karzark that I saw before.”

“A portrait?”

“Yes. It might be, because they share the same distinctive red hair and blue eyes... However, their overall features are quite similar. From what I gathered, every portrait of Azell Karzark looks different from each other, so I’m not sure if it is a reliable source.”

“Mmmm.....”

Jares furrowed his eyebrows as he tried to remember the past. A voice he heard when he was still a young child brushed by his mind.

‘Jares. No one else in this world knows about this, but we are a family that had been descended from a great bloodline. You should be proud of this truth.’

He was sure that this was something his father had told him. He had a feeling that he had heard this story many times before. Moreover... He was sure he had loved listening to this story.

Jares’ head hurt as he focused on his memories. However, he couldn’t remember anything related to that story.

“Shit.”

Jares grinded his teeth from frustration.



# Chapter 85 – The Scar Left On The World (5)

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## 9

Laura Aunsauras had failed at her mission, and she eventually returned to the Plain of Darkness. The elders didn't blame her. They had read the reports given by her, and the members that went along to carry out the plan. They decided nothing else could have been done by her.

After she retreated away from the elders, Laura went towards a detached palace where the Aunsaurus family lived.

Someone appeared in front of her when she arrived.

“Laura.”

It was a beautiful blonde haired Dragon Demon teen. He possessed horns that looked as if it had been cut from ice, and color was infused into it. It was Kieren Baldazark. Laura spoke as she looked at him with a blank face.

“Lord Baldazark. Shouldn't you be conducting a mission right now?”

Kieren had addressed Laura in a friendly manner. However, Laura was strict in using honorifics by calling him a lord. Kieren shrugged his shoulders.

“I was merely given a scouting mission where I had to assess the marquise of Karzark. As I was conducting my mission, I received a report saying the Cold-blooded Queen was on the move. I was given an order to return.”

“So you just cleanly broke off from your mission. That is very like you, Lord Baldazark.”

“Of course, I was given a return order.”

“If it was Niberis, she would have stayed to obtain a good result. She would have fought with the Cold-blooded Queen.”

“.....”

Baldazark’s expression stiffened slightly.

Laura spoke.

“Of course, I’m not in a position to speak about such things.”

“Ah. Mmmm. Laura. What happened this time....”

Kieren knew Laura had come back after failing her mission. Laura had never experienced failure before. He was wondering if he should console her or not.

Laura spoke.

“Surprisingly, it wasn’t too bad.”

“Huh?”

“I’m talking about failure. Now that I experienced it, and I don’t think it’s that big of a deal.”

“.....”

He couldn’t comprehend what she was talking about. Laura spoke to Baldazark, who had a puzzled expression on his face.

“However, it is regretful that sir Rick had to meet his death..”

“...I judged he would be able to succeed in his task. I guess I was too hasty with my decision.

At those words, Kieren let out a bitter laugh.

Rick was a Dragon Majin that had been a vassal of the Baldazark family. He was dispatched alongside Laura to complete this mission. Originally, he was tasked to do the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual with the Thunder Dragon after the mission. However, he was pushed into a Dragon Slayer’s Ritual with the Frost Dragon, which was unexpectedly brought forth by the Guardian Shadows.

In the end, he was defeated in the life and death battle. He died after presenting his Wisdom to the Frost Dragon.

“.....”

Laura was silent for a brief moment as she looked at Kieren. She dropped the issue as she changed the topic.

“Cold-blooded Queen. I’ve never seen her, but I heard she is more dangerous than the Dragon Sword Duke.”

“Mmmm. I haven’t met her either. Even if I do come across her, I was given orders not to fight her. These were the guidelines given to me.”

“She is someone I want to pit against Niberis at least once.”

“Laura.....”

Kieren’s brows furrowed a little bit as Laura continued to express her desire to trip up Niberis. Normally, Laura didn’t even bother with Niberis. One could actually feel the tangible malice emanating from Niberis towards Laura. However, Laura’s indifferent attitude had always bugged Niberis. So what had changed?

Laura spoke.

“Sorry. Am I being petulant?”

“Huh?”

“I’m somehow in that sort of a mood. When I return, I’ll probably be compared to Lord Baldazark, and you know how much I don’t like hearing that.”

“.....”

Niberis, Laura and Kieren were the young geniuses that received the most attention in the Plains of Darkness. Of course, they thought of each other as competition. This was why they were mindful of each other’s merits. In truth, this wasn’t something they demanded of themselves. Their backgrounds put pressure on them, and it was sometimes hard to breath.

Kieren was someone that was pulling ahead of the competition. Unlike Niberis and Laura, he had experienced several failures earlier on. However, he had used this experience to better himself. He was more careful in his planning now, and he steadily increased the merits he achieved.

Niberis had been doing well compared to Kieren, yet she had suffered a very painful failure. Laura had suffered something very similar this time around. The elders of the Aunsauras family had requested perfection from her starting a young age. It had been said enough that she was fed up with it. She was annoyed when she thought about the words that would be directed towards her.

Laura spoke.

“Lord Baldazark. What would you do if there was a descendant of Azell Karzark still alive?”

“Mmmm? You mean THE Azell Karzark? Why are you asking such a question?”

“I’m just curious.”

Laura didn’t go out of her way to explain to Kieren about Azell Zestringer. Kieren tilted his head in confusion at the question that had came out of nowhere. He answered her.

“I guess it could happen. Humans are able to procreate easily, so there might be some descendants left in the world. We killed the house of Karzark, and anyone related to him by blood. However, we aren’t gods. We can’t always be perfect in our tasks..”

If Azell had heard this conversation, he would have used every method possible to kill them. The eradication of the Karzark family had been a calamity carried out by the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

“I guess that isn’t what I wanted to ask you. What would you do if his descendant really got in our way?”

“We have to kill him. That is an obvious question.”

“Isn’t it? Thank you for giving me an answer.”

As if she expected such an answer, she nodded her head before she turned her body away. However, when she reached a point where Kieren couldn’t see her, she looked up into the air as she mumbled to herself.

“However, I want to ask him a question. How did our burdens, which comes with our bloodlines, differ from each other....”

The Dragon Demon King had wanted to make a new world, and they were the chosen ones that had received the blood of such an exalted being.

Then there were the humans, who had received the blood of the one that stopped the Dragon Demon King from establishing himself as a ruler.

It had been 220 years, and she wondered the difference significance each side put in their bloodlines. Laura was very curious as to learn about this.

She stopped walking. She had been heading towards the detached palace of the Aunsaurus family. However, she started heading towards a new direction. She wanted to meet someone that’ll give a different answer to the question she posed. She was going to meet an elder, who was the oldest being on this land.

After rescuing the Dragon Demon Prince Seigar, the Guardian Shadows didn't say any goodbyes. They just disappeared. It seemed they didn't want to reveal themselves to Seigar, who wasn't part of the Guardian Shadows.

The unconscious Segiar woke up the next day. Seigar realized his teacher had saved him, and this knowledge made his face turn red. Then he explained what happened in his battle with Laura.....

“So if we piece together your story, Segiar....”

When he heard Segiar's words, Kairen was able to come to a conclusion.

“So the reason why they tried to kidnap you and Arrieta... Maybe you guys are from the Dragon Demon King's lineage?”

“That is what I think.”

Seigar nodded his head.

As Laura Aunsaurus was subduing him in the fight, she had dropped several clues, and he was able to come up with a conjecture. She had pointed out Seigar as she spoke regarding the Great Being. She had said he was someone, who had a part of the king within him.



In some ways, their conclusion was a bit hastily made. They only had snippets of information. However, Laura was basically a noble that had come out from the Plains of Darkness. The only one she would call 'king' was the Dragon Demon King.

Azell spoke.

“The probability is high. It somewhat explains the reason behind their kidnap attempts... Mmmm. No. This doesn't really explain it.”

“How can it not?”

“I know right? However, there are a lot of Dragon Majins, who were descended from the Dragon Demon King Atein”

“Mmmm? What are you talking about?”

Kairen asked in surprised. From what he observed from working as part of the Guardian Shadow, the Dragon Demon King worshippers treated anyone with the blood of Dragon Demon King Atein as nobles. No, they were treated almost as royalty. Yet Azell was speaking about such existences as if they were commonplace.

Azell spoke.

“That is... Atein is one of the oldest Dragon Demon, and he is

hypothesized to be the very first mage. He named himself the Dragon Demon King, but before he could unite the Dragon Demon race to muster up an army, he had lived for a very long time. He probably had a lot of relationship throughout his lifetime, and from what I know, he left behind a long of descendants. Therefore, there are an abundant amount of beings all over the world with Atein's blood in them."

"...this is the first time I've heard such a story."

"Did the records regarding Atein get erased too?"

"No. That's... Hmmm. I guess so."

Kairen had been about to deny it, but he furrowed his brows.

For the past 220 years, the Dragon Demon King worshippers had erased numerous records off of the world's history. It was reasonable to think that records about Atein was included in this deletion. No, it was likely.

"I knew the Dragon Demon King had lived for a long time, and he was one of the very first Dragon Demons. However, I never realized he had so many descendants. No. It would be more accurate if I said I've never even thought about it."

"Well, it is probably hard to fathom a being that named himself a king left behind descendants all over the world. I guess it is normal to not want such information spread widely."

Azell accepted that possibility. Before the Dragon Demon war had started, Atein's existence was an unverified legend. He had been treated like a character from a myth that disappeared a long time ago. The knowledge of the origin of the Dragon Demon race and the existence of Atein was limited to magicians. Moreover, no one expected Atein to live so long.

Basically, the world found out about Atein's existence after he named himself the Dragon Demon King, and started the Dragon Demon war. Even Azell didn't know about Atein, and he had learned the information through Carlos at a later date. Moreover, Atein's past was discovered when Carlos researched in depth into the subject.

Azell spoke.

“Well... Even if the princess and prince was born with a more undiluted blood of the Dragon Demon King, it wouldn't be a reason to kidnap them. If we are comparing the purity of their bloodlines, the ones in the Plains of Darkness are probably superior in those terms.”

“That's true. Yet they still tried to kidnap them even as far as going through such danger. There must be an underlying reason....”

“We don't have any other clues to speculate on the topic. We could expend more of our efforts on speculation, but it'll be a shock in the dark.”

“That is unfortunate.”

Kairen clicked his tongue.

Seigar spoke.

“Mmm. That woman was a really scary magician. If compared to the Dragon Demon Niberis, whom my sister fought, Laura was her equal.”

“She probably is stronger than Niberis. This is why you don’t have to be so down on yourself. Of course, you would have come up short against her.”

“No. If I was a little bit more careful....”

Seigar let out a sigh. He was too careful with his subordinates. He made the error of stepping forward in such a defenseless state. He knew what he was worth, so he should have been a little bit more cautious....

Kairen just looked at Seigar before he spoke.

“Seigar.”

“Yes.”

“As this event as an impetus, why don’t you come with me to be retrained for an extended period of time?”

“Again?”

“Yes. I still have a lot I can still teach you.”

“Mmmm.....”

Seigar was conflicted. It was an attractive offer. It was true the teachings under Kairen had been pure pain. However, if he hadn’t spent that time with him, Seigar wouldn’t be the man he is right now.

He knew he couldn’t hold a candle to Kairen, but he had thought he had enough power. However, that notion was demolished by what had happened. He almost felt a compulsive need to get stronger.

Kairen spoke.

“I want you to think over it then you can make your decision. I’m going to spend a good amount of time exchanging sword strikes with Azell.”

“What?”

Seigar was surprised. He didn't know how he had been rescued. He had just woken up from his state of unconsciousness. The Guardian Shadows had hidden themselves long time ago, and Seigar assumed it was Kairen, who had rescued him.

Of course, he would have such a reaction. If one looked at Seigar's standards, Kairen represented absolute strength to him. Kairen hadn't said he would instruct this human knight. He had used the expression of sharing swords with Azell.

Kairen could read his pupil's thought, so he smirked.

"Azell distinguished himself greatly in his actions to save you. If sir Azell hadn't fought and defeated the Thunder Dragon called out by them, you would probably be still on your way to the Plains of Darkness. You might have been subjected to all kinds of treatments."

"He fought and defeated the Thunder Dragon in an one-on-one battle?"

Segiar's confusion became much deeper. A human had fought a 1on1 battle with a Dragon, and he had won? Did they want him to really believe such a story?

Kairen spoke as he looked at Azell.

"As you can see, you did something that couldn't be done by a human in Segiar's way of looking at this world."

“In the past, wasn’t Duke skeptical of my claims too?”

“Still, I remember myself showing a little more flexibility in my attitude towards your claim.”

“Well, I guess everyone beautifies the past memories sometimes in the course of one’s life. I heard this tendency develops as one gets older....”

“Chet. You are always so insolent.”

Kairen clicked his tongue as if he was indignant. Then he spoke.

“So in the spirit of this conversation, I want you to have a sparring session with Segiar.”

“I’ll have to refuse the offer.”

“Ho-oh?”

“I think what I did this time around allows me to be a little bit more obstinate. Isn’t that so?”

“Unfortunately, I cannot gainsay you on that point.”

“If the prince accept your offer and he comes to the Dukedom of

Tarantos, I'll think about it. In truth, I just want to rest for the next few days."

"Mmmm....."

Kairen shut his mouth at those words.

'I'm such a... I spoke for the betterment of my student, and it caused me to put my foot in my mouth.'

Kairen lamented on the fact that his thoughts had been too shallow. Azell's condition had been poor prior to arriving here, and he hadn't been able to sufficiently grow his power. He also didn't have the needed tools, yet he had gone through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. After all that, Kairen was asking him to have a sparring session with Seigar.....

"...I'm sorry."

"You don't have to be so earnest with your apology. In terms of my physical health, I'm much better now than when I arrived here."

Azell let out a light laugh.

Seigar was listening to the conversation, and his expression indicated that he had no idea what was going on. Everyone in this kingdom including the royal family treated his teacher with the utmost respect. Yet his teacher was being so friendly and



respectful towards a young human....

No, it would be understandable if his teacher was treating Azell as if he took a liking to him. However, Kairen's attitude indicated that he was treating Azell as an equal.

Kairen didn't pay attention to Segiar's confusion as he spoke.

"Well, you probably have a lot of work to do now, so you should go meet your lieutenant. We are going to stay here for the night, and we plan on leaving in the morning."

On that day, Seigar had to thorough a busy day of work. In the end, he couldn't give an answer to Kairen's offer. Moreover, there were too many things for him to consider when making the decision.

Kairen didn't ask for an immediate answer. He gave his farewell to Seigar, and he left for the Dukedom of Tarantos with Azell in the morning.

# Chapter 86 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (1)

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1

Another two months passed after rescuing the Dragon Demon Prince Segiar from an attempted kidnapping carried out by the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

The estate in the Lance Mountain was occupied by Azell. The mountain was in the midst of a cold winter, and the whole mountain was starting to become painted white by snow and ice.

Kairen had kept his promise he made around half a year ago. He had completed the Dragon Sword. When he heard the news, Azell left the estate in the Lance mountain, and he came down to the Tarantos castle.

“This is a bit abrupt, but.....”

Havanz spoke.

“Your body can’t be compared to the state you were in when you first got here.”

“I wanted a body like this one.”

Azell took off his shirt, and he stood in front of the mirror. He spoke as took poses that showed off his rippling muscles.

His body had completely changed from the body he had half a year ago. He had a lot of scars on his body as he endure a harsh training regiment. However, he didn't have a single ounce of fat now. His body was perfect as it was balanced out by flexible muscles.

His outer appearance wasn't the only change that had occurred. His Energy Pulse couldn't be compared the before. As his Energy Pulse became revitalized, his capacity for storing magic had increased. One's increase in physical ability could be seen outwardly, but the changes occurring inside was far outstripping his physical improvement.

Moreover, he now had 6 Rings of Life encasing his heart. All of them had gone through the process of Dual Banding.

He had been able to drastically recover his power, because he had the perfect environment and support. Azell had taken advantage of what was made available to him to achieve this result. Moreover, there was the Thunder Dragon's power he had absorbed from the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. It allowed him to grow past the point he had originally targeted.

‘Still, I'm falling short of making the Dragon Demon Qi.’

He had gone through his second Dragon Slayer's ritual, so Azell's magical energy had a stronger flavor of Dragon Demon Qi. However, he was short of being able to forge it into Dragon Demon Qi.

‘But maybe....’

There was one thing that was bothering him. He became aware of a faint difference in his Energy Pulse.

He became aware of this difference after the second Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. His magical energy took on a stronger flavor of Dragon Demon Magic, and he sensed some unknown particles floating around inside his Energy Pulse.

Basically, he wouldn’t have been able to sense it at all until his Dragon Demon magic had risen to a certain level. It meant something was reacting the the Dragon Demon Magic.....

It wasn’t as if he didn’t have a hunch on what was going on. However, Azell wasn’t going to speculate. He decided to calmly observe it.

“I guess I have to head out now.”

Azell put on his clothes, and he gave a farewell to the Lance mountain estate, which he had occupied for the past half a year. Then he descended to travel to the Tarantos castle.

During his stay, Winter had come. Snow had piled up on the mountain roads, and various places were frozen solid. The going was slow as they traveled down the road.

Azell and Havanz could have easily descended the mountain in short order, but there were other people in their group. They couldn't just leave them behind.

When they reached the Tarantos castle, the sun was starting to set, and Kairen's patience had reached its limit.

"You are late! What took you so long!"

"The winter roads are dangerous. Moreover, there are delicate women in our party. How could I just leave them behind and come here by myself?"

"You could have left everything to Havanz. You could have just come by yourself!"

"These people have looked over me for the past half year. I'm not boorish enough to leave them behind."

"Ughh. The fact that you don't like to lose any verbal exchanges is still the same."

Kairen grumbled.

Azell grinned.

"I really want to give thanks to you, duke. I was able to train to my heart's content thanks to you."

“Your thanks can come in the form of sparring matches.”

“That I can do as much as you like.”

Azell gave an exaggerated bow. Kairen snorted as he took Azell underground. It was a secret room that had been prepared for the magic ritual.

Beorein was sitting in a chair, and he was asleep. He opened his eyes when he felt the presence of two others in the room.

“Mmmm? You are finally here. You made an old man wait. What an inconsiderate fellow.”

“It seems the duke didn’t think at all about the time it would take us to come down the mountain.”

“That fellow is always like that. He believes the world revolves around him.”

Beorein got up as he massaged his back, then he went to the corner of the room.

The Dragon Sword was there.

“So this is.....”

The Dragon Sword was floating atop the magic circle, and one couldn't call its appearance as being sword-like. A sword was manufactured with utmost care, yet the blade of this sword didn't hold an edge. The surface was roughly carved. It looked like a club that had been carved into the shape of a sword.

Azell approached the sword that didn't look like a sword.

Beorein spoke.

“Do you remember the explanation I gave you last time? The final step has to be done through your hands.”

“Yes.”

Azell gave his answer as he grabbed the sword. At the same time, the Dragon Sword resonated.

Ba-dump.

Azell's heart beat loudly alongside the sword. At the same time, the magical energy that arose from the Rings of Life responded to the Dragon Demon magic seeped inside the Dragon Sword. It resonated with each other.

Oooooooooohng!

The ripple of light started to spread outwards. Azell could feel a powerful Dragon Demon magic within the Dragon Sword, so he couldn't hide his excitement. This reaction was as strong as the time he grasped the Kairen's Dragon Sword, which had been loaned out to him. He had felt this electrifying feeling only when he had held his Dragon Maken, and this feeling dominated his whole body.

‘I already have a shape in mind.’

The last step in the production of the Dragon Sword had to be done by the owner. First, one had to cause a resonance. Then one used the powerful Image Making skill to decide on the final shape of the Dragon Sword.

Azell had already decided on the shape of the Dragon Sword early on. It was the shape of the Dragon Maken, which had been preserved for the past 220 years by Carlos' powerful magic.

Wooooooooooooooooo!

The powerful Dragon Demon magic raged inside the room like a storm. It was so intense that the magical circle couldn't handle the power, and the room shook.

Beorein was taken aback.

“Isn't this much more fierce than the time you made your sword? Is this going to be ok?”



“His magical energy has expanded so much that it can’t be compared to before. In such a short amount of time, he.....”

It was weird to call half a year’s time as being short. However, for a Spirit Order practitioner, it was extremely short when considering how much Azell had increased his magical energy.

Kairen watched Azell, who was emitting magical energy that couldn’t be compared to his former self. At this level, he might be the strongest human alive!

Kwah-ja-jahk... Kwah-jahk!

Numerous cracks started to form on the surface of the Dragon Sword, and pieces started to fall away. From within this item, a snow white blade made out of the Dragon Bone emerged. The Dragon Sword made its appearance.

“Ha ha ha.....”

Azell couldn’t hold back his laughter.

“Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha!”

Dragon Demon magic.

It allowed one to coerce nature through Imagery.

A human could only gain this through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, yet this power was erupting out of Azell's hand. Powerful Dragon Demon magic was exploding forth from Azell, and he stored it inside the Dragon Sword.

A sharp sword strike was executed at the empty air.

Shweeeeeng!

The sound was so clear that it almost gave one goosebumps. The sound rang out as something surprising occurred. A normal person wouldn't be able to recognize it, but Kairen and Beorein was astounded.

"The magical wave..."

"He cut through it?"

The powerful magical wave had been swirling around him, and Azell had just sliced through it with a sword strike. The energy was cut so cleanly that it was hard to believe there had been a magical wave present before. There was a stillness in the room.

It was a hair-raising strike. Was it really possible to cut off the flow of magical energy so abruptly? The magical energy was instantly put into dormancy.

Azell face was glowing with excitement as he spoke to the two frozen men.

“This is the greatest gift of all. I really... Thank you duke and count.”

“Then it is time for you to show me your gratitude. You won’t act like a goody two shoes that insists on proper sleeping time?”

“Of course not. I am willing to spar with you until the crack of dawn.”

Azell answered Kairen’s request with a smile.

## 2

Kairen also hadn’t been taking it easy for the past half year. Kairen had visited the Lance mountain estate early on, and they had made a promise to each other. Kairen had kept this promise.

“Did you completely master the Gaze Detection technique?”

“Hmm. In truth, it’s a very tiring technique.”

Kairen grumbled.

Gaze Detection. It was more useful than any detection ability out

there, so Azell had taught it to Kairen. There was a lot of overlap between Spirit Order and Dragon Arts, so Kairen had an easier time understanding the technique's secrets.

Kairen followed the know-how given by Azell to learn the technique, and in the beginning, it had been a time full of torment.

When someone laid their eyes on him, he would become aware of it.

On the surface, it looked like a very useful skill, but there were downsides to the technique. Normally, he hadn't been aware that a numerous number of gazes were always on him. The information regarding these gazes started pouring in, and his mind turned chaotic. In this process, he had to go through the painful experience of processing the slew of information. Azell had warned Kairen that if this process wasn't done properly one might develop a psychosis. His mind would trick him into thinking that someone was staring at him even though no one was staring at him. Kairen had felt the weight of this warning in his bones.

Azell spoke.

“As with all techniques dealing with the mind, the learning process is painful. It is much more troublesome than learning a technique that deals with the body.”

“I agree. Still, it was too useful of a technique to pass up on it.”

After he fought and overcame this process, he earned the ability to detect danger, which far outstripped his previous capabilities. As a test, he performed a guerilla warfare with his subordinates. He even allowed them to employ snipers. His subordinates were allowed to use magic and arrows. However, he was able to assess and react to everything that was thrown at him.

Azell spoke.

“Now you have to learn the second lesson.”

“What?”

“I’ll tell you about what happens when a fight occurs between people, who mastered the Gaze Detection technique.”

At the same time, Kairen felt a cold gaze behind him. It was a gaze filled with killing intent. Moreover, he could tell something was rapidly coming up behind him.

‘Is it a clone?’

Kairen already knew that Azell used the Cloning technique, ‘Dance of the Shadow’, which gave substance to his clones. This was why he didn’t hesitate to turn his body as he swung his left sword. Then he readied himself for a frontal attack with his right sword.

‘Uh?’

However, there was nothing in the place where he had attacked. There wasn't a clone where he had attacked, and Azell used Instantaneous Movement to quickly attack Kairen's side. Kairen's attack had created an opening.

Kwahng!

Accompanying a sound of explosion, Kairen was pushed backwards. He was taken aback.

‘He became really strong!’

He wasn't talking about combat ability. When their swords clash, Kairen had felt a brute force. Azell's physical ability was much higher than what Kairen had estimated it to be.

‘He defeated a Dragon in a one on one battle, so I knew he wasn't normal. Still....’

However, he didn't have the luxury to ruminate over this thoughts. He started feeling gazes from all over the place. Front, back, left, right.... Numerous gazes stimulated his senses before disappearing. It started messing with his senses.

However, it was impossible to ignore the gazes. The Gaze Detection technique was a focused ability that alerted the user whenever a hostile gaze was on him. Moreover.....

Kwah-chahng!

In reality, Azell's clones appeared to attack, and they disappeared afterwards.

“Ooh-oohk!”

Che-che-che-che-che-cheng!

Azell used terrifying speed to continue his attack. Kairen could tell with his eyes that Azell was barely using his magical energy, yet his speed couldn't be compared to before. Kairen would no longer be able to suppress him with brute strength.

“Shit!”

Kairen's stance crumbled, and he was sent flying. Kairen was barely able to right himself when Beorein spoke.

“Oh. This is a new experience for you. I never imagined a day would come when you would get embarrassed by a young man. This is a treat for my eyes today.”

“I was an exploratory skirmish. An exploratory skirmish! Just shut up and watch.”

Kairen threw a fit. Azell spoke.

“Of course, it was an exploratory skirmish. I gave you a taste, so shall we get to the main course? Now you know how this will go.”

“I’ll act in kind.”

Kairen belatedly activated his Dragon Demon magic. The effects of the Dragon Arts was to drastically increase one’s physical abilities.

Ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh!

When he sparred about half a year ago, he had to considerably restrict his ability. They had to fight in terms of techniques. Azell displayed surprising level of skill, but the difference in physical and magical capacity was too large.

However, it was different now. Azell’s physical ability had risen to the level of a Dragon Demon. Kairen, who had trained to his utmost limit, couldn’t take Azell lightly!

Kairen asked a question.

“What method did you use? How can a human’s body reach such a level?”

He didn’t know how this was possible. If Azell was really the descendent of the hero Azell Karzark, were all human heroes this strong in the Dragon Demon war? Were humans able to distinguish themselves through bravery against the Dragon Demon



race?

Azell spoke.

“You just have to train the Tributaries to the Energy Pulse.”

“Tributaries?”

This was the first time Kairen had heard of this word.

Azell gave an explanation.

“Blood vessels have capillaries, and muscles have fibers, right? It is a similar concept. Basically, a Spirit Order practitioner forms an Energy Pulse with the magical energy that naturally follows a route in a human’s body. This flow of energy is strengthened.”

The basic framework was similar in a macro view, but slight differences appeared when one looked at the details.

To be precise, Azell had followed Liglan’s teachings. He had branched small Tributaries from his main branch of Energy Pulse, and he had expanded the reach of his Energy Pulse to every corner of his body. Every part of his body was flowing with magic. This meant his capacity to hold magical energy was expanded to an incomprehensible level, and the magical energy that reinforced his physical body was strengthened.

After hearing Azell's explanation up to this point, Kairen was amazed.

“That is... Isn't that quite similar to how the Dragon Demon's body is structured?”

“Yes. It is a way to copy the body of the Dragon Demon race, which is filled with the grace of the Dragon Demon magic. This is the extreme form of body reinforcement.”

The Dragon Demon race was an amalgamation of wisdom-seeking Dragons and life-seeking Demonic race.

From the moment of their birth, the Dragon Demons possessed a body blessed with magical energy and Dragon Demon magic. The sturdiness of their bodies couldn't even be compared to the humans.

Kairen spoke.

“Basically, you aren't using Spirit Order to temporarily boost your physical ability. Your body has actually reached the level of a Dragon Demon... So that's how it is.”

“However, it isn't foolproof. I haven't finalized it yet.”

“Do you have more to do?”

“As one partakes from the Dragon’s power from the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.... A human may exceed those from the Dragon Demon race.”

In Azell’s prime, his strength and speed had exceeded that of the Dragon Demons. In terms of pure physical ability, the only ones that could rival him was the Dragon Demon King Atein, Atein’s direct descendants and the 4 Great Dragon Demon Generals.

Azell spoke.

“Well, shall we continue this?”

“You really are an impertinent bastard.”

“Excuse me?”

“Doesn’t this mean that you hid your true skill in our previous spar sessions?”

“Technically, I wasn’t. I didn’t have the means to use these techniques.”

“Now you are able to?”

“Yes. However, I can’t use them all yet.”

A faint blue light started to flow over Azell's Dragon Sword like running water. Azell spoke as he took in what was happening in front of him.

“However, I won't hold back in showing it all to the duke.”

Then... Kairen suffered a complete defeat. He hadn't lost like this, since his parents had passed away. He experienced it on that day.

# Chapter 87 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (2)

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3

Two weeks had passed. During this time, Kairen had experienced his pride become thoroughly wrecked.

“Ooh-ook. Shit.”

After a round of sparring session, Kairen spoke as he healed the wounds on his cheeks. He spoke as he glared at Azell.

“How many secret techniques do you have? Every time it looks like I’m about to break one another new technique come out. It feels like an infinite loop.”

“I still have 472 left.”

“...is that for real?”

“I’m joking.”

“Ughhh.”

It had been two weeks since Azell had gained the Dragon Sword. The two of them had participated in fierce sparring matches everyday. Currently, they had already conducted over 200 sparring matches. They’ve already demolished two training halls, and these

halls were in the process of being rebuilt. They had to move their location to the mountain, and everything was being overturned as they clashed with each other.

Moreover, the result was....

Kairen had lost all of them.

Some sparring matches lasted less than 5 minutes, and there were long training sessions that lasted over an hour. Every match had different conditions and rules set as they fought each others to test their mettle as martial artists.

Kairen flopped backwards as he lie on the floor.

“Ah. I really can’t do this any more!”

“Are you finally giving up? Wow. In truth, I was getting a bit tired of this. I’m glad. Now I can sleep in a comfortable bed.”

Azell smirked. For the past 2 weeks, Kairen had been very dogged in his request for matches that it was wearing a little thin for Azell.

‘One more match! I want one more match!’

Kairen kept repeating those words as he charged towards Azell. He didn’t have much time to rest.

Kairen was going to retort, but he just sighed as he spoke.

“I feel as if I’m 80 years younger.”

“So you are saying you are like a 20 year old young man. Does this mean I can treat you as an equal?”

“Don’t push your luck or the the status quo we have right now might be scrapped.”

Kairen spoke as he snorted.

“I’ve never been thoroughly beaten like this, since my father trained me.”

“You are talking about the previous Duke of Tarantos.”

“Yes. It was hard to find any good opponents after my father passed away..”

“When did your father pass away?”

“As I said before, it was around 80 years ago. It was right when I was about to enter into my sleep cycle.”

The Dragon Demon Race was an amalgamation of Dragons and Demons. This was why the Dragon Demon race shared the activity

and sleep pattern of these races. During childhood, it was common for a Dragon Demon to fall into a hibernation period every few years. If it was short, it would last one week. If it was long, it would last a month or two. This happened quite frequently.

Kairen was deep in his recollection.

“That is why I didn’t get to see my parents for the last time. I was told later that the Dragon Demon King worshippers had targeted me during my hibernation period, and they caused a lot of problems. Our castle was set on fire, so I don’t have single picture of them left in my possession.”

“.....”

“Well, don’t look at me like that. This happened a long time ago. My mother and father died by the hands of the villains... This was also why I chose to become a Guardian Shadow.”

Kairen let out a bitter laugh. It had already been over 80 years. However, the wound was still present inside Kairen’s heart. It was also the main motivation behind his fight against the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Kairen spoke as he stood up.

“For all my life, I trained in an attempt to surpass my father. There were too many things I wasn’t able to learn from my father. However, I’ve been running out of available skills that I can learn



from others, so I believed I had achieved my goal.”

He was called the Dragon Sword Duke, and no one in the kingdom could teach him anything new about the martial arts. It was actually the opposite now. Everyone was trying to learn from him. This was why Kairen didn't stop his efforts to get better. He wanted to surpass the prior goal he had set. The creation of the Dragon Weapons had been part of that plan.

“However, I now realize that I have been too arrogant. This is the thought I had when I was thoroughly defeated by you.”

“Your were right to think that way.”

“Aren't you suppose to console me by saying it isn't true?”

“I forgot the duke likes people paying lip service to you. I'll rephrase my words. You are wrong. If you parent heard what you have achieved, they would most definitely feel a swell of pride at the fact that you have surpassed....”

“...stop. You are giving me the goosebumps.”

Kairen grumbled then he laughed.

“Please continue speaking.”

“Which approach do you want?”

“Don’t pay lip service to me. Just tell me what you were originally going to say.”

“In my opinion....”

Azell paused for a brief moment before he continued to speak.

“Your predecessor might have.... I believe your father was learning what is called the ‘forgotten technique’. It was a term coined by the Dragon Demon King worshippers.”

“Like you?”

“Yes.”

“Are you saying they probably wanted to eliminate the knowledge from being passed on to the future generations, so my father was eliminated?”

“That is what I think. I also believe the castle was intentionally set on fire to burn the records. If what I suffered up until now is any indication, I think it is quite possible they put in a lot of effort into making that happen.”

Two hundred twenty years was a long time for the humans, but it was almost a single life span for the Dragon Demons. These beings lived as part of the human society, so the knowledge and

techniques wouldn't be easily forgotten.

However, the fact that one was from the Dragon Demon race didn't mean they all learned magic or the Dragon arts. Even if they did, they didn't learn it to the extreme for the express purpose of battle. Moreover, they weren't going to willingly pass on the knowledge and techniques to strangers. This was why it was enough for the Dragon Demon King worshippers to eliminate the beings that had critical knowledge, and the high level techniques.

Azell spoke.

"I've heard it from Mr Havanz. The knowledge of the Dragon Slayer's Ritual and the Dragon Arts wasn't passed down in Sir Rogan's family."

"However, Count Aldrick's children weren't inclined towards martial arts."

"Wouldn't that make it more likely that he would have been targeted?"

"Mmmm....."

"This is a little bit weird for me to say, but.... I can teach you some of the stuff you were supposed to have learned from you father. At the very least, I can teach you a portion of it. I have a lot to teach you."

“I would have never expected to hear such words from a human that is the age of my grandchild if I had one.”

“Are you averse to it?”

“I’m not saying that, because I don’t like the idea. Now I have something to learn, and there is someone willing to teach me. This is... I’m in a bit of an unfamiliar territory.”

Kairen put on a bitter smile. It had been a long time, since he was the one learning from someone else. For a long time, everyone put him on a pedestal, and they wanted to learn from him. Moreover, Kairen had thought that was how it should be. Now he was in the position to be the student learning from someone else. He had never imagined such a day would have come.

Kairen suddenly asked a question.

“Azell.”

“Yes.”

“Why are you being so good to me?”

“You were also good to me... Isn’t that enough?”

“It is hard for me to accept that. These techniques are something I wouldn’t even teach to a friend. I would understand it if you had

decided to take up the sword and use those techniques for my cause. However, you plan on teaching me these valuable techniques... As a martial artist, I question why you are doing this.”

Whether it was a magician, Spirit Order practitioner or Dragon Arts practitioner, it was all the same. All of them were very careful in choosing the candidates they’ll pass on their techniques and knowledge to. Kairen had taught Arrieta and Seigar at the plea of the Dragon Demon Queen. However, he didn’t have a true disciple yet.

Azell could understand what Kairen was thinking.

After a brief moment of thought, he spoke the truth.

“It is needed.”

“Needed?”

“It is to prepare for the danger that might come in the near future... I feel the need to return the power that was stolen from the beings that the Dragon Demon worshippers consider to be enemies.”

The Dragon Demon king worshippers had weakened the power of the population and those that might rise up against them through a long period of time. At the same time, they had kept their history and techniques intact. It was a very dangerous situation.

“If it is as they believe and the Dragon Demon King Atein really revives....”

Azell remembered going up against Atein. He was the first of the Dragon Demon race, and he was also the world's first magician. He had lived as long as the existence of a single race. He was an unnatural being that looked at the world through a strange and long range view.

“The Dragon Demon King worshippers that reside in the far-away Plains of Darkness will sweep over the world again. When that time comes, we need power to be able to fight against them.”

“Do you think we'll be at a disadvantage if it does happen?”

“Yes. Currently, our side has forgotten about the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, and the Dragon Demon Qi. Moreover, our side forgot the true techniques behind the Spirit Order and Dragon Arts. If our enemies use these knowledge against us, we will be powerless.”

“You said Dragon Demon Qi. You still haven't given an explanation on what it is.”

Azell had mentioned the Dragon Demon Qi when he explained the Dragon Slayer's Ritual. However, he had too many questions he had wanted to ask that Kairen had half-forgotten about it.

Azell didn't answer his question. He continued to speak.

“I was impressed by the duke. The fact that.... You were able to make the Dragon Sword.”

Currently, there were only scraps of record left regarding the Dragon Demon Qi. However, Kairen had spent 30 years to gather these scraps, and he had made the Dragon Sword through these efforts. It was a less powerful than having the Dragon Demon Qi, but it was much superior in the fact that it was a tool that anyone would be able to use. It was superior to the Dragon Demon Qi in that aspect.

“Didn’t you tell me that the record you had found was the impetus in making the Dragon Weapons?”

“That is correct.”

“That record was about the Dragon Demon Qi..”

Azell started to explain to Kairen about the Dragon Demon Qi.

The soul had to be used as ingredient as it was refined through the Dragon’s power. This was the ultimate weapon that came out as a result.

Humans and Dragon Majin can take the power of a Dragon through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, and the Dragon Demon Qi can be produced. This was beyond having a tool of power like the Dragon Swords. It was a miraculous power for the Spirit Order,

Dragon Arts and magic that strived for the pinnacle of power.

Kairen swallowed his breath.

“Such a thing really exists?”

“Yes. It was one of the reason why humans were able to win in the fight against the Dragon Demon race. There is a big gulf between those that have and don’t have the Dragon Demon Qi.”

“Mmmm.....”

“This is why the duke has to produce Dragon Demon Qi too.”

“What?”

Kairen was surprised. He asked the question as if he didn’t understand what had just been said.

“Didn’t you say the Dragon Demon Qi is made through taking the Dragon’s power? Moreover, this can only be done through the Dragon Slayer’s ritual?”

“Yes.”

“However. I’m of the Dragon Demon race. I thought you said I couldn’t participate in the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.”



“You can’t.”

“Then how will I be able to make the Dragon Demon Qi?”

“Of course, I haven’t told you the full story regarding the Dragon Demon Qi.”

Azell smirked.

“I told you that this was made through taking the power of a Dragon by conducting the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. However, I was talking about it through the prism of being a human. The humans don’t have Dragon Demon magic in the first place. A human has to defeat a Dragon through the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual to gain the Dragon Demon Magic. However, doesn’t the Dragon Demon race already have Dragon Demon magic?”

This was why there were those that possessed Dragon Demon Qi within the Dragon Demon race. The most notable being the Dragon Demon King Atein and the Dragon Demon generals, who followed him. Each of them were walking calamities that could face down thousand troops.

“Of course, it isn’t easy to make it. There are three methods.”

Azell unfurled three fingers, and he lowered one finger.

“The first method is to use the secret technique behind Dragon Demon Qi to produce it yourself. It is the hardest method.”

“Why is that?”

“To my knowledge, it takes about 10 years at the earliest to produce it. If it takes a long time, it might take up to a 100 years. If you are from the first generation of the Dragon Demon race, then it might be a different story.”

“.....”

The first generation Dragon Demons meant they were directly born from the amalgamation of a Dragon and a Demon. The Dragon Demons that were currently in the human society wasn't first generation Dragon Demons. They were the descendants. However, there were still first generation Dragon Demons born into the world. It happened from time to time. Moreover, these being possessed much more powerful Dragon Demon magic than the descendants.

‘This was true for Atein and the Dragon Demon Generals.’

Azell felt a chill as he thought about how strong they had been. They had Dragons as parents, but they were the first of their kind. They didn't have Dragon Demon parents.

Azell folded his second finger.

“The second method is to combine the power of a Dragon Demon and a Dragon Majin. It could also be a human that possessed Dragon Demon Qi. However, these candidates need to have cultivated their magic or Dragon Demon Qi. Of course, this also take a lot of time and effort.”

“How long would it take?”

“It really depends on the skill and quality of the participants. However, the difficult part is... You still fall short of meeting the requirement. If you really learn and train hard, then you might be able to reach the bare minimum requirement. However, do you think you’ll be able to find people of similar level as you? Moreover, they would have to sacrifice their Dragon Demon magic to pour this power into you. Ah, I guess Count Michael fits this description. He is a magician, so this sacrifice might matter less than someone training in the Dragon arts.”

“.....”

Kairen frowned. Azell had a big smile as he folded his third and last finger.

“The last method is to use the Dragons..”

“Dragons?”

“It is impossible for the Dragon Demons to conduct the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual. However, they can use the corpse of the Dragon

after killing it. The Dragon Demon race can't absorb the power of the Dragons, but.....”

When the Dragon Demons saw the humans gain power through the Dragon Slayer's Ritual, they attempted to gain power through the same method. However, the Dragon Demons found out that they couldn't absorb the Dragon's power.

“They can use it to create the Dragon Demon Qi.”

“Then.....”

“You can kill a Dragon, and you can use its corpse.”

There was a massive amount of magic stored inside a Dragon's corpse. One could use this special method to accelerate the formation of Dragon Demon Qi in a Dragon Demon.

“The efficiency isn't that great, but it can't be helped. The Dragon Demon Qi was meant to be created over a long period of time....”

Of course, this was to the best of his knowledge. At the time of the Dragon Demon war, there hadn't been a lot of Dragon Demons in the Dragon Demon army that possessed this power.

Kairen spoke.

“That means there aren’t that many amongst our enemies that possess it.”

“Yes. Even the one called Niberis didn’t have the Dragon Demon Qi yet.”

“Hmmm.....”

Azell suddenly asked a question.

“Ah. You did say they are coming here.”

“It seems they have various functions they have to attend in the new year. They’ll be coming here afterwards. It’ll probably take them over two weeks to get here.”

Kairen grinned as he headed towards the estate with Azell.

# Chapter 88 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (3)

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4

When the new sun came up, Arrieta left the capital with her brother to travel a long road. It had been a while, since she had done this. Moreover, there were over 200 escorts accompanying them on the road.

Arrieta let out a sigh inside the carriage.

“I wonder if our teacher will become infuriated at us.”

Currently, Arrieta and Seigar was headed towards the Dukedom of Tarantos for a vacation.

Their mother, the Dragon Demon Queen, strongly insisted on them taking a break. It was decided that they would take half a year of rest from the work required by them as members of the royal family. Originally, the throne would have never consented to such a plan, but the Dragon Demon king worshippers had tried to kidnap both of them. Since they were in personal danger, the throne decided to allow it.

Of course, it was called a vacation on the surface. However, the real purpose of this break was for them to be retrained by Kairen. It wasn't just Seigar. Arrieta also felt the need to get stronger.

Seigar had a bitter smile on his face.

“Teacher will come to realize this wasn’t your idea.”

They were currently being escorted by 200 people, because the throne was worried the Dragon Demon king worshippers would try to kidnap them again. The throne put a stipulation that they couldn’t refuse this escort, so Arrieta brought the several personal subordinates she under her command. Seigar brought a large portion of the men enlisted under his banner.

“I hope so. It isn’t as if we can send everyone back after arriving there... Well, you can talk to him nicely about it, Seigar.”

“What? You are going to push that task off to me?”

“I only brought 15 subordinates. Isn’t the rest of the group under your command? If one of us has to be struck by teacher’s severe reprimand, I still think you should be the one taking the brunt of it.”

Arrieta was still in the progress of assembling her own unit that would be directly under her command. The Dragon Demon Queen and Seigar had gathered some useful people for her, but the number was still too low. Moreover....

“Moreover, you brought selected members from your unit, so they can learn from the Duke Tarantos. However, you are trying to obfuscate this fact... Do you think our teacher won’t see through your plans? Do you think he’ll just go along without making a note of it?”

“Mmm. Well... I guess I have no choice.”

Seigar scratched his cheek.

It was as she surmised. Since Seigar was going for a prolonged stay, he was looking for an opportunity to ask for some tutelage from Kairen for his men. He would also ask a joint training session with the knights of Tarantos. He was always trying to find a way to increase the power of his troops. This was why he chose suitable members for this trip with that purpose in mind.

Arrieta spoke.

“Now that I think about it... He might still be there.”

“Who do you mean?”

“I’m talking about sir Azell.”

“Ah ah. He’s probably there.”

At the midway point of this trip, Seigar had sent a message to update their progress. He indirectly heard about what was going on at the dukedom.

“From what I heard, it seems our teacher is deeply immersed in sparring with Azell. It is to the point where he is ignoring all his



other works.... Mmmm.”

Arrieta spoke when she saw a perplexed expression on her brother’s face.

“It seems you can’t accept it.”

“If I’m being honest, I can’t.”

“I think there is sufficient information going for him. From what I heard from our teacher, Azell made significant contributions to your rescue....”

“I heard about it, but I didn’t witness it. Moreover, there’s no other eyewitnesses except our teacher.”

Kairen had said Azell had won a one-on-one battle with a Dragon. Even if he worshipped the ground walked on by his teacher, he was having a hard time taking his teacher at his word. If one of his subordinates that was with him saw it, then maybe....

“There is no way a human would be able to pull that off. Moreover, he is young...”

“There was a time when I thought similar thoughts as you.”

Seigar raised his head at Arrieta’s words. She spoke.

“However... I changed my opinion when I saw sir Azell.”

“.....”

“If he is still with our teacher, you’ll be able to see his skills. It actually might be a good experience for you.”

Arrieta smiled as she looked at her conflicted brother.

She was happy at the thought of seeing Azell again. It had been over half a year, since she had seen him. How much had he changed?

When Arrieta and Segiar arrived, they wanted to immediately meet with Kairen to extend their greetings. However, the house steward Havanz told them Kairen was absent at the moment. He wanted them to wait. When they asked the reason behind it, Havanz awkwardly gave them an answer.

“That’s... Sir Azell is our guest, and the duke went out to spar with him. They still haven’t returned. I told the duke to come back early since the two of you were arriving today....”

At those words, Arrieta and Seigar asked Havanz to assign lodging to their party. Then they were lead by a servant to the back mountain where Kairen and Azell was present. They found Kairen and Azell at a frozen lake....

“Are they atop the water?”

Seigar's eyes turned round.

Azell and Kairen was running atop the lake as they exchanged sword blows. It was winter, but they weren't running a frozen lake. The ice had been broken, and the two of them were fighting atop the rolling waters.

The surprising part was the fact that the fight continued to be fought atop from the water from the time they discovered the two from afar to the time they got close.

Arrieta was astonished.

"That's incredible. They aren't using repulsive power to impact against the water. They are actually walking on water."

"What?"

Seigar became surprised at her words, and he looked at the feet of the two men.

If it was running and fighting atop a body of water, it was something Seigar could do. However, his method was done through pressurizing and detonating pockets of air with his Dragon Demon Qi. It wasn't truly walking on top of water.

When he looked closely at Azell and Kairen, they were stepping

on water as if it was solid ground.

At times, they came to a stop, and they rocked back and forth with the surface of the water. They walked, skidded and ran across the water as they clashed. The act looked so natural that it looked unreal.

Chwahhhhhh!

The two were running in a circle as they clashed, and it sent up a spray of water. At the same time, Kairen's body dipped below the surface of the water.

On the other side, Azell just slid back about two steps. Kairen realized what had happened, so he surged up to the surface of the water. Then they started up exchanging sword blows again.

Kah-ahng!

The rebound caused Kairen's body to descend below the surface of the water. The water that was displaced for their clash returned to its original location, and his body was pushed under water.

Azell had a carefree attitude as he rained down sword strikes from above.

“Poo-uhk! You really are going to go there!”

Kairen had swallowed some water, so he coughed. Azell responded to him.

“You ambushed me earlier before when the match hadn’t started yet. I was dunked into the water. I don’t think you have the right to say that....”

“That was that and this is... Poo-uhp! Uh-poo!”

In the end, Kairen couldn’t exit the water, so he was pushed under water. Azell let out a laugh as he thoroughly enjoyed what was going on. He retreated backwards. In the next moment, the surface of the water exploded, and a rough spray of water rose into the air.

Chwah-chwah-chwah-chwahh!

Kairen exited the water, and he looked like a drowned rat. One could see his teeth chattering.

“Shit! It is cold enough to make me gnash my teeth!”

“Of course. It’s winter now.”

If it was a normal person, one would have to be worried for that person’s life. Kairen raised his eyes.

“Are you saying you want to avoid a match on a wet field?”

“It isn’t anything like that. I’ll spar you no matter where it is. However, we should end this here.”

“What are you saying! We are far from done!”

“Guests have arrived. Wouldn’t it be unbecoming to show such a disgraceful behavior in front of your students?”

Azell pointed towards the shore of the lake where Arrieta and Seigar was standing. Kairen furrowed his eyebrows.

“It’s already that time?”

“I told you earlier that I was hungry, so we should head back and eat.”

“I don’t remember hearing that.”

“Wow. You are getting more thick skinned as time passes.”

Kairen snorted at Azell’s idle remarks. He started walking towards the shore of the lake. It was as if he was walking on solid ground, but he was walking on water. As he walked, heat emanated from his body, and the water on his body evaporated.

Everything he did looked very natural. Kairen was learning techniques from Azell, and he was getting stronger each day.

When he arrived at the shore, he laughed as he looked at his two students.

“It’s been awhile. I am glad you guys came.”

## 5

“It hadn’t even been a year since I last saw you....”

Arrieta had a mystified light in her eyes as she spoke to Azell.

“You are like a completely different person. How were you able to do such a feat?”

“I ate good meals, and I was able to get sufficient rest. Moreover, once you combine those factors with a great view, this is possible.”

Azell grinned. Arietta had a sudden fit of laughter.

“Thank you for teaching me such an incredible secret. Anyways, it is good to see you again, sir Azell.”

“I feel the same way, princess.”

“Enora also spoke a lot about you.”

“When did I do that princess?”

“When you heard Sir Azell was here, you agonized over whether you should send a letter or not?”

As expected of a maid to the royal family, Enora had been standing with impeccable posture. Her face turned red. Azell laughed..

“Wow. I can’t believe Ms. Enora did that. It is an honor.”

“You’ve grown more ill-natured during the time we haven’t seen you.”

“I think I was infected by the duke’s personality. I wasn’t usually like this....”

“Please come up with a more believable excuse.”

Enora harrumphed as she turned her gaze away.

Maybe, it was because she was at an age where she was still growing, but she had grown a lot in the past 7 months. She looked to be a little bit taller, and there was a feeling of maturity around her. Still, she looked like a young girl to Azell.

Azell spoke to the man sitting next to Arrieta.



“It seems the life of being a personal knight to the princess suits you, sir Giles. You look more open now.”

“Is that so? My current work is clearly better than what I did at the western border.”

Giles had also changed a lot. His face hadn't changed, but he looked more stylish than before. Moreover, he had a dignified air around him. His clothes reflected the position of being the princess' personal knight. Currently, he was wearing a formal outfit. He gave off a completely impression now.

Azell asked a question.

“How's sir Boar doing?”

“He is actually doing quite well right now. I've received a lot of help from him.”

Boar's attitude in how he treated others had changed drastically, and the opinion of him had improved. His family already had a lot of power, but his conduct went a long way in strengthening his family's power. Giles received a lot of benefit from his acquaintance with Boar. Of course, Giles had gone from a soldier dispatched at the border to being a royal knight. If it wasn't for Boar, Giles would have had a very hard time getting used to his current life.

Of course, it wasn't as if the help was one-sided. Giles had been taught Spirit Order techniques from Azell, and he had passed it on to Boar. Whenever they had time, the two of them met up to refine their techniques, and they trained to increase their internal energy. Giles had been a big help to Boar in those terms.

Azell spoke after hearing everyone's story.

“By the way, you guys brought 200 people? That is a lot of people.”

“It couldn't be helped. The throne wouldn't have allowed us to come here if we didn't take a force of that size. Of course, Seigar jumped on this opportunity to bring his people.”

Kairen was belatedly informed of the situation, so Seigar was getting an earful from Kairen right now. If everything was done as it should have been done, the escort would have returned to the capital after a brief stay. However, Segiar had insisted on bring his own people. Now the Dukedom of Tarantos had to be in charge of taking care of 200 people, who would be here for an extended stay.

Azell spoke.

“It seems the prince is really passionate about his work.”

“He is greedy. Maybe when he retires from the seat of the Dragon Demon Prince, he'll try to aim for a post as a general.”

“What about the princess?”

“I’ll probably live a free and easy in my retirement. I don’t want to go out into the battlefields. I don’t want a tiresome life where I’ll have to deal with people. I’m aiming to become the world’s best slacker.”

“It is quite an enviable goal.”

“Isn’t it?”

She asked a question after she sipped her tea.

## Chapter 89 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (4)

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“I heard an interesting story about you in regards to what my brother went through. Could you confirm the veracity of this story?”

“Which story are you referring to?”

“Teacher said that the Dragon Demon king worshippers had brought a Thunder Dragon to facilitate Segiar’s kidnapping. He said you bested a Thunder Dragon in an one-on-one battle.”

“It is true.”

“As I had suspected.....”

She had expected it to be true, but she was still surprised when Azell confirmed it. A single human had fought and won against a Dragon. How was such a thing possible?

Of course, this wasn’t just anyone. If it was Azell, she thought it was possible. When she had travelled with him, Azell had been an existence that was full of surprise.

Arrieta asked a question.

“I know I’m reaching back far for this question, but did you kill the Earth Dragon we met in the Balan Forest?”

“Yes. It was possible, because something anomalous occurred to my benefit.”

Azell didn't hesitate to answer the question. He readily admitted to his deed. He had determined that it would be ok to tell her what had happen now.

“Is that the ‘friend’ you referred to before?”

“Correct. He was an incredible magician. He had left something behind in my body, and thanks to it I was able to win.”

“I see.”

She had just heard something incredible, yet Arrieta didn't question him. She lauded his deed. She didn't doubt Azell. He had done too much for her to doubt him.

Still, she couldn't stop her curiosity. Arrieta asked him a question.

“What is your identity, sir Azell?”

“It seems I'll have to give you the same speech as the duke. What if....”

Azell had expected this question. He had show Arrieta too much

to gloss over it by saying he had lost his memories. As he did with Kairen, he was going to tell her the truth first.

“After defeating the Dragon Demon king Atein in the Dragon Demon war, Azell went missing two years after the war. The record doesn’t specify if he died or not. Isn’t that true?”

“Yes.”

“What if he hadn’t died?”

“Mmmm?”

“His best friend, Archmage Carlos, devoted himself to completing an incredible magic. What if this magic was used to put Azell in a deep sleep where his aging process was suspended? What if he was placed in a location far away from prying eyes? What if he slept like a Dragon through the long years in a place where humans didn’t dare travel?”

“That’s.....”

Arrieta furrowed her eyebrows.

“Are you saying that you are the actual hero Azell Karzark? An incredible magic allowed you to sleep for 200 years, and now you are awake?”

“Will you believe me if I told you that is true?”

“Mmmm.....”

Kairen had immediately rejected this question. However, Arietta was having a hard time answering the question, and her face hardened. It was most definitely an absurd story, but Azell had shown her too much marvelous deeds to outright deny his claim. Even if he was the actual Azell Karzark, his powers of persuasion was a bit....!

‘No. If it is true, most of the questions I have becomes resolved.’

She had seen and experienced many secrets by watching Azell. It was as if he was from a different world. This sense of dissonance could be cleanly resolved by this single answer. She had seen Azell from an earlier date than Kairen, so she was having a hard time rejecting Azell’s words.

Arrieta asked Giles.

“What do you think, sir Giles?”

“You want my opinion?”

“Yes. From my knowledge, you were the first one to find sir Azell. You’ve seen things about him that I haven’t. I am curious as to what you think about this matter.”

Hadn't Giles seen Azell when he first awoke in his corpse-like state? After he thought for a brief moment, Giles shook his head from side to side.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know. In truth, the story is too incredible for me to say it is true or not. But....."

"But?"

"If it was proven that sir Azell's story was true, I feel as if I would accept it. At the same time, I would feel silly for not accepting it beforehand."

At his words, Arrieta smiled as she looked at Giles briefly.

"I see. I feel the same way."

"Do you really believe in my words?"

"In truth, it is unbelievable."

When Arrieta shook her head from side to side, Azell put on a bitter smile as if he had expected this. Arrieta spoke.

"It is such an outlandish story. However, I can't help myself from entertaining the possibility of it being true. I've thought this from the first time I saw you. You are a really amazing man."



“Thank you. In truth, I am a secret descendant of Azell Karzark. This is why the knowledge and techniques I have were passed down from my forefathers.”

“That story is a bit more easier to digest.”

Arrieta spoke.

“Let’s leave it at that for now.”

“For now?”

“Yes. I think I’m satisfied with that explanation for now.”

After she spoke, she raised her tea cup.

## 6

Azell shared a conversation with Arrieta, Enora and Giles as they caught up on what they’ve been doing for the past 7 month. When he exited the room, Azell was immediately confronted by Seigar. It was as if he had been waiting for Azell. Seigar had on an expression as if he was dubious.

“You should immediately make time for me, sir Azell.”

“May I ask what this is about, prince?”

Azell queried when he heard the domineering order.

Seigar replied.

“I want you to be my sparring partner.”

At those words, Azell let out a bitter laugh.

“This is just a guess, but did the duke instigate this?”

“My teacher said, ‘you’ll know once you fight him.’ I don’t think I can pass this by without confirming it for myself.”

“I see. Then I’ll be your opponent. Shall we go to the back mountain where it’ll be more discreet?”

“Those words.....”

Seigar’s eyes narrowed.

“Are you saying it, because you are sure I’ll be humiliated in front of my subordinates?”

“You are so inexperienced that you can’t even gauge how much internal energy your opponent has right now.”

At that moment, Seigar turned around in surprise as if he had been burned by fire. He was sure Azell was in front of him, but Azell's voice was suddenly heard from his back.

‘How can this be? I didn’t even see him move?’

Azell was looking at him from where the direction where the voice had emanated from. The man that was in front of him was behind Seigar, and he hadn’t realized Azell had moved.

Azell smiled as he spoke.

“In truth, I’m disappointed in you.”

“What did you just say?”

“Your previous reaction was understandable, but now you won’t accept reality even when you saw it with your own two eyes. Will you not be able to accept reality until your reality shatters from being struck? If that is true... I don’t think you will have much luck in facing your future opponents. The enemy has plenty of ‘humans’ that can dominate you. You will suffer a miserable defeat by underestimating opponents that are better than you.”

His words were arrogant beyond measure. However. Seigar wasn’t able to get mad at his words.

No, he was looking at Azell with cold sweat running down his body. He felt an overwhelming and frightening feeling coming from Azell as Seigar looked at him. Was this feeling similar to what one felt when facing a Dragon?

Azell spoke.

“You believe there is no way a human can be stronger than a Dragon Majin. If you aren’t able to throw away such arrogance.... I will do as you wish. In truth, we don’t have to go far. I can show it to you right now.”

“Kook.....”

Seigar gritted his teeth as he extended his hand towards his back. His sword was too large to equip at his waist, so he had it strapped to his back.

“Stop.”

At that moment, Kairen’s voice was heard from behind Azell. At the same time, the pressure that was pressing down on Seigar disappeared as if it had been a lie.

“Duke.”

“Both of you are overflowing with power. If you fight here, the damage to my property would be massive. Do you really want to destroy my storied castle?”

“Somehow, I feel like destroying it. However, I’ll restrain myself. It’ll be troublesome for Mr. Havanz.”

“What about me?”

“I kind of want to put the duke in a difficult situation.”

“Ughh. You hate to lose even a single exchange of words.”

Kairen shook his head as if he had lost.

“I didn’t realize you were so against fighting Seigar.”

“I don’t want to unnecessarily catch the prince’s interest.”

Seigar had been quite blunt with his interest in Azell. This was why Seigar tried to bait Azell into a fight in their last meeting. However, Azell disliked Seigar’s actions.

Kairen spoke.

“All right. I apologize for ignoring your wishes. I want you to forgive me. I did it for the sake of my student.”

“Teacher!”

Seigar jumped up when Kairen showed deference to Azell. From a common-sense standpoint, this shouldn't have happened. Even the king shows deference to Kairen, yet he was apologizing to a young human over such a trivial manner.

Seigar was taught by Kairen at an early age, so he was just and even-handed in treating others compared to the others in the royal family. Still, the fact that Seigar was of royal blood hadn't changed, and he was very self-aware about ranks. If he applied his common sense to this situation, Seigar couldn't understand what had just gone on.

Kairen ignored Seigar as he asked Azell for a favor.

“Let me formally ask you this. Could you break apart my lacking student's ego? Unfortunately, I wasn't able to.”

“Since you are asking me in such a manner, I can't refuse. Anyways, this was something I always thought had to happen one day.”

Azell accepted his request.

## 7

Seigar received favorable assessment as a commander of an organization.

He didn't care about the background of his men. He valued competence above all else, and he knew how to take advice from his subordinates. Even if he was outstanding, he knew there was a limit on what he could do by himself. This was why he didn't hesitate to borrow help for his subordinates.

On the other hand, there was a part of Seigar that didn't trust them at all.

‘Humans are weak.’

He believed in the competence of his human subordinates. However, no matter how competent they were, he believed there was a hard cap in terms of martial ability for humans.

This idea had solidified in his mind as he lived his life. This was where he differed with Arrieta in how he viewed the men he found.

He searched all over for competent people, but the people he found were always within his preconceived notion. Every man he found just reaffirmed his way of belief.

Azell was an anomaly that went against Seigar's way of thinking.

“Koo-oohk.....!”

Seigar let out a moan as he rolled across the ground. He immediately tried to right his balance as he stood up. Right before

he got up the exquisite sword strike came in to disrupt his Energy Pulse.

Kah-ahng!

He was barely able to block the blow with the blade of his enormous sword. He once again rolled across the floor. At that moment, the sword was coming in at an angle right at the location where he would land.

‘This doesn’t make any sense!’

He dropped to the floor in fright. The balance he had almost recovered was broken once again. He had to roll across the ground again.

This process kept repeating itself in an endless loop. Azell adjusted his sublime power on the first clash to put Seigar on the ground. It had been 3 minutes, yet Seigar was unable to get up even once. He continued to roll across the ground.

“My god.....”

Arrieta was at a loss for words when she saw the sight. She already knew Azell was outstanding in terms of the techniques. However, the techniques he was showing right now was beyond her imagination.

Giles also stood there looking with rapt admiration.



“I never knew it was possible to control an opponent to this degree.....”

# Chapter 90 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (5)

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In three minutes, Azell used one hundredth of the power used by Seigar.

Seigar was using the ability of his superhuman body to try to regain his broken stance. His senses were accelerated to the extreme using Dragon Demon magic, and he was even using the Dragon Arts technique that he had drilled at ad nauseum. Azell moved in a relaxed manner compared to him. He was emitting mental waves through Spirit Order, and he was stimulating Seigar's senses. He was using it to bring out the response he wanted. It was as if he had the power to foresee the future. Azell took one or two step at a time as he stabbed his sword in an easygoing manner.

Just by doing that Seigar wasn't able to get up. In terms of Magical Energy, techniques dealing with senses, and the gap in insight regarding a battle... In every facet, Azell was on a different stratosphere.

Kwahng!

Suddenly, a sound of an explosion rang out, and Seigar body flew into the air. He had no sense of balance as his body spun in the air. Seigar's body struck the ground, and he rolled across the floor.

When he got up, Seigar was a total wreck. He wasn't wounded, but he was out of breath. He was dripping with sweat.

“Huhk, huhk, huh-uhk.....”

Seigar’s stamina was absolute. He was able to swing a large sword, while wearing heavy armor, for an extended amount of time. However, he had been continuously rolling on the floor. He hadn’t be able to tell the difference between up, down, left or right. As he rolled, he had felt his Energy Pulse being blocked intermittently, and his stamina had been drained at an incredible pace. His stamina had just bottomed out right now.

‘He intentionally let me up.’

If Azell had wanted to, he could have forced Seigar to roll on the ground until he had fainted. Seigar realized this fact. He knew Azell had intentionally left open an opening, so he could get out of it.

In the past, he had suffered all kinds of difficult situation as he was trained by Kairen. However, this experience was uncharted territory for Seigar.

Azell approached as Seigar sucked in air.

“You took a spanking of this magnitude, yet all you can do is try to get your breath back? You are soft as they come.”

“Ooh-oohk!”

Seigar felt an unprecedented fear as he faced Azell. Seigar had

lost his composure, and he unconsciously swung his sword when Azell closed the distance.

It was a strike powerful enough to split a boulder in half. However, Azell didn't dodge it.

Shweeeeeng!

'I missed?'

Seigar's eyes bulged. Azell hadn't dodged, yet he had walked inside his strike to close the distance. Seigar's attack met no resistance as it cut through the air, and his stance broke down again.

A combination of the Cloning technique, Concealment technique and the mental wave, which stimulated the senses, was used to produce this result. Azell had come into Seigar's personal space a beat late as if by magic. Azell was still unhurried as he leisurely took a step forward. Seigar's stance had been broken, so he couldn't do anything.

Too-hahk!

Azell didn't even use his sword. He struck his fist against Seigar's shoulder before he could right himself. This wasn't just a simple blow. Seigar had been forcefully righting himself, and Azell's blow was perfectly timed. It accurately severed the flow of his Energy Pulse.

Seigar was about to fall over once again. He gritted his teeth, and he used his powerful lower body to endure. Then he lashed out with his sword....

Too-kahng!

The counter came even before Seigar could swing his sword half way. Azell lightly backhanded Seigar's body with the hand holding his sword. The impact penetrated through his midsection, and the pain could be felt in his bones.

‘Kuh-huhk.....!’

Seigar was having a hard time breathing, and he felt his body folding.

This was the end.

When he realized this, Seigar tried to use his Dragon Arts....

Tuhng!

As if he had been waiting for this move, Azell focused his mind. In an instant, he planted a counter.

‘This... is... impossib.....!’

Seigar felt as if he was in a nightmare. It felt as if his opponent could see everything that was going on within his body, and every one of his actions were countered.

This wasn't something one could do just because one's techniques were good. Azell's extreme senses were able to read everything about Seigar. However, one needed an ungodly reflexive speed that could react to these sensory inputs.

This exchange repeated itself several times, and it was hard for Seigar to even grip his sword. However, he refused to fall. Even as he was steadily moving backwards, Seigar gritted his teeth, and he stood on his own two feet....

'This is my chance!'

After intentionally baiting a counter, Seigar leaned in to deflect the blow with his shoulder. At the same time, he jumped, and he brought down his sword with everything he had.

"That wasn't too bad. If you did this about 5 exchanges earlier, I might have given you a passing score.

Azell sounded as if he was enjoying this, and his words chilled Seigar.

As Seigar continued to receive frightening blows, he had saved his energy for a chance to attack. However, it seemed even this had

been within Azell's design.

Azell countered Seigiar's sword strike head on.

Kwahng!

As the sound of an explosion rang out, Seigar flew through the air.

'I lost the hold of my sword.....!'

In a fight, he was taught to hold onto the sword no matter what. This mandate was almost like scripture to him. However, for the first time in his life, he had received such an overwhelming blow that even his steel gauntlet exploded. He lost the grip on his sword.

Koo-dahng-tahng-tahng!

Accompanying the loud sound, Seigar rolled several times across the floor before he became sprawled out on the ground.

When it quieted down, Azell asked a question.

"Would you like to continue this?"

"No... It's fine. It is my defeat."

Seigar acknowledged his defeat with a tired voice.

## 8

On that night, Azell was in front of a mirror, and he was letting someone handle his hair. Enora was standing on a step, and she was brushing out Azell's hair. Azell had roughly cut his hair to keep it at a reasonable length, but it seemed Enora wasn't satisfied with his haircut. She volunteered her services.

She suddenly asked him a question.

“Why were you so wicked against the prince?”

“Mmmm?”

“He isn't just any person. He is the prince. Weren't your actions a bit too much?”

“Didn't I do something similar to Boar?”

Azell thought about the time Boar requested a sparring match as he spoke. Enora thought for a brief moment before she spoke.

“...now that I think about it, you are right. You have always been reckless, sir Azell.”



“What? Reckless? In what way?”

“How can you be so shameless? You treated the prince that way. No one would even think about doing what you have done. Do you know how afraid I was as I watched? If the prince became angry, he could have asked for your head! What would you do if he did that?”

“I carried out the deed, because I assessed the the prince wasn’t that narrow-minded. Anyways, I wanted to avoid it if possible.”

From Azell’s perspective, he didn’t feel the need to be considerate towards Seigar. It wasn’t as if they had gone through a life and death situation alongside each other. Seigar was Kairen’s student, and brother of Arrieta, nothing more, nothing less.

This was why Azell didn’t want to bring unnecessary attention on himself. He didn’t make himself known to Seigar. He was a bit bothered by the fact that the Dragon Demon king worshippers were targeting Seigar, but Seigar had experienced an attempted kidnapping once. Azell assumed Seigar would be careful on his own.

On top of it all, Kairen had always been a bit too eager for Azell to fight Seigar, and there was some distaste from that fact too.

Seigar had experienced bone-weary hardship, and he had seen everything with his own two eyes. However, he wasn’t able to let go of his self-conceit. Why should Azell look kindly on a person like that?

Enora spoke.

“Sir Azell is really.... You look as if you aren’t afraid of people in high places.”

“In truth, I’m not afraid of them.”

In the past, he tried to spare himself from the trouble. If he fought with a person with power and rank, it would inevitably cause harm to the people in his surrounding.

‘No. That’s not entirely correct either.’

When he thought about it, no one in the Nadick Empire dared to get on his nerve after the Dragon Demon war. He was someone that had access to Carlos and the emperor. Moreover, he had many friends in high places, and the people had loved him.

‘Now that I think about it, if someone accused me of leading a reckless life, I have no argument against it.’

Enora worked as a maid to the royal family, so Azell’s attitude shocked her.

Enora was astonished.

“Is this because you are the legendary hero?”

“Hmmm. Do you believe my story, Ms Enora?”

“Maybe?”

Enora had the eyes of a surprised bunny when Azell started talking about his own identity.

He wondered what thoughts were going through her head. Azell laughed when he had this thought.

“What kind of answer is that?”

“I don’t know. If I think about it logically, it doesn’t make sense. Do you know what I mean?”

“It isn’t something you should try to confirm with me.”

“Mmm. Is that so? Anyways.... If it is true, I would be a little bit disappointed.”

“Why?”

“From the time I was young, I grew up listening to the story of hero Azell Karzark until my ears hurt.”

There were a lot of heroes in history. However, how many hero

had received universal praise from everyone like Azell?

Even in this era, Azell Karzark was the most well known and popular hero. Many children during the Dragon Demon war grew up hearing the tales of Azell's heroism, and many young women dreamed about him showing up in front of them like a knight in shining armor. As time passed, Azell became an idol, and his image became engraved as the epitome of a hero.

“However, sir Azell is a bit... How should I say this...”

Enora tilted her head as she thought about what to say. Then she spoke.

“You are like the brother next door.”

“That's new.”

Azell laughed. He had never heard himself described as the brother next door.

Enora spoke.

“It is as if the brother next door had a somewhat mysterious and secretive past. Moreover, this person had defeated a Dragon by himself. All of this just makes everything surreal. Sometimes it feels like I'm listening to a story dreamed up by a bard.”

“Sometimes reality can outstrip one’s imagination.”

“I guess so. If it really is true, it does sound really incredible. At the same time, it feels as if it isn’t that big of a deal?”

“What the heck?”

Azell couldn’t help but laugh.

Enora suddenly spoke.

“Let’s say it is true.”

“What? Do you mean what if I am the real Azell Karzark?”

“Yes. That is my supposition.”

“You should just say you don’t believe me. What the heck is up with a supposition?”

“Don’t be so picky about my answer. If a man shows such a behavior, he won’t be popular with the ladies.”

“I’ll just shut up and listen to you. Please continue, miss.”

“What do you think the era was like when hero Azell was alive? People were tormented by the Dragon Demon race, and there were

a lot of righteous people willingly sacrifice their lives for other people. How different was that era?”

Azell put on a bitter smile at her questions.

“Unexpectedly, there isn’t much of a difference. At the very least, the people are the same.”

“Really? ”

“Yup.”

“However, if I hear about the tales describing the old times, it doesn’t sound like it....”

“As time passes, they only remember the memorable events. They remember the beautiful blinding moments, and they remember the evil events that one can’t look away from... However, those events didn’t make up the entirety of that era.”

At the time, people had to join forces to fight an enormous enemy that threatened their future. However, even in such a dire situation, people continued to fight those within the same organization for profit. There were those that tried to avoid facing death when it was time to cooperate each other. Discrimination occurred regardless of one’s position.

“During that era, everyone was backed up against a wall. When people have nowhere to run, their true character is revealed.”

One wouldn't know if a person was truly hideous or noble unless they reached this point. It didn't matter if a person normally acted like a crook or if that person acted with integrity. When people were driven into a corner, they sometimes chose the coward's way out. They also chose to act villainous at times. Then there was the people that were noble, and they sacrificed for others. He had seen it all play out too many times.

“There were highborns, baseborns, young, old, the weak, the strong.... It was all the same. It was an era where one's worth could only be proven only by one's actions.”

Azell had seen countless people. There were those that had been abominable, and there were those that had been pure. Then there were the unsure people that had been too weak. They were like reeds that shook from the hardships of life.

‘Dragon Demon worshippers...’

When he woke up in the era, the most shocking part had been the existence of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. It wasn't the fact that the remnant of the group he had fought still existed in this age. He was shocked at the fact that the Dragon Demon king had become deified as time had passed in this world. This wasn't just Dragon Demons and Dragon Majins. He couldn't understand why the ‘humans’ were worshipping him.

‘Why do they worship him in this era? It is an evil that had ended a long time ago....’

## Chapter 91 – Birth Of The Dragon Sword (6)

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If it was during the Dragon Maken War, he would have understood the existence of these humans. It was common for humans to betray their own kind for survival as they crawled underneath the Dragon Demon Army. Then there were some that had been true believers of Dragon Demon King. They believed him to be a god.

However, why would such humans exist in this era? Azell was having a hard time comprehending this point.

Enora spoke.

“You really speak like someone, who had lived through that era.”

“I thought you were going to consider my story as only speculation?”

“I did. Mmm. Doesn’t this mean sir Azell is over 200 years old? Should I call you elder from now on?”

“I’ll be thankful if you call me that in about 40 years from now.”

Azell let out a bitter laugh.



He was a human, but he was allowed to reside in the Plain of Darkness as a Dragon Demon king worshipper. Black Swordsman Duran thought about the moment when he developed his great faith.

When a human was born, one was either a noble or baseborn. It didn't matter if one were talented. It didn't matter what character one had. If one was born from low caste parents, one would never break above their station no matter how talented one was. One would be treated like trash by those born as nobles.

In such an unfair societal structure, Duran had been at the bottom. He had been a slave.

There were 7 kingdoms that ruled over this continent, and only two allowed slavery. Moreover, slaves were viewed basically as gutter scums.

From a young age, Duran had a massive build, and he was known for his strength. He was a head taller than anyone else in his age group, and no one could surpass him in work that dealt with strength.

When he grew up, he naturally did all the hard work. If violence was needed, he was called to take care of it. When he had shown aptitude for fighting, he was taught martial art. His owner wanted to put him to good use.

Still, Duran didn't get a big head over his treatment. Even if he

was strong, he knew he was insignificant compared to the knights, who had learned Spirit Order.

At the same time, he hadn't put these knights on a pedestal.

‘Those bastards are scared at the possibility of us getting stronger.’

He first became aware of it when he started learning martial arts. When he learned the systematized techniques that were monopolized by these men, a new world had opened up to Duran.

Duran had a natural aptitude for martial arts. He learned snippets of technique as he was berated by the snobby men. Still, he was developing much faster than those who were receiving proper tutelage.

At that moment, Duran had an epiphany.

‘The only advantage they have is the fact that a lot had been passed down to them..’

It was the same for martial arts and Spirit Order. A person was able to become a great presence through the knowledge one was able to monopolize. If all the secret techniques were shared equally amongst the masses, will they be able to hold superior positions over the people under them?

He made a mistake when he allowed such thoughts to enter his

mind.

‘Thank you. What is your name?’

When he went out on an excursion, he had come across his master’s daughter being attacked by monsters. He threw his body in front of her to save her. The knights, who were supposed to be protecting her, were easily beaten. If Duran hadn’t fought as he received severe wounds, the lady would have lost her life.

However, Duran didn’t receive any rewards after the incident. Instead, he was punished.

‘A slave dared to touch a sword! Unforgivable!’

Duran had used a dead knight’s sword to defeat the monsters.

Slaves weren’t allowed to pick up any weapons. At the very most, the slave owners allowed slaves to be armed with clubs.

It was a given that slave would be put down even if one touched a sword by mistake. The knights considered their swords to be symbols of their honor. It was considered to be an unforgivable insult if a lowly slave touched one.

It wasn’t logical, but this was how the world worked here. Where Duran lived, this was common sense. The nobility didn’t look at slaves as humans. The slaves were worth less than the cheapest item they owned.

Duran despaired.

At the time, he really had no choice. He couldn't win using only his fist. He couldn't overcome this situation using only his body. He could run away by himself, but he would later be executed for surviving the encounter, while a noble lady had died.

'You evil bastard! I showed favor to such a lowly bastard by teaching you martial arts. You dared to steal and learn swordsmanship?'

It was unfair. He had never learned swordsmanship. He only remembered snippets of swordsmanship he had seen by chance during his martial arts sessions. Even with such limited knowledge, he was able to defeat the monsters. It was the first time he had held a sword.

Duran had saved his daughter's life, yet the master was acting as if he had committed an evil act against god and man. He continued to berate Duran with a red face. At that moment, Duran had a thought that was unforgivable.

'They are all retarded bastards.'

The knights had been inferior to him. He had picked up the sword for the first time in his life.

He had done their job for them, yet he was the who had sinned?

The one, who came to the rescue of Duran, was the daughter of his master.

‘Please forgive him.’

At the request of his daughter, her father forgave Duran’s transgression. However, it wasn’t as if he had gotten off easy. He was stripped naked as his entire body was chained. Then he was shut in an isolated underground room for 5 days. He wasn’t even given water during his punishment.

After the incident, the lady became interested in Duran.

‘Duran. There is no way that is a name befitting a slave.’

She had made Duran her servant, and he was always by her side.

However, she hadn’t been a master with a good personality. She became hysteric at minor incidents, and of course, she took out her anger at the people under her.

Duran had become the subject of her tantrums countless of times.

One day she was taking out her anger on Duran by whipping him when she did something totally unexpected.

‘Hoong. You are probably better compared to that weak bastard.’

It was after she had broken up with her boyfriend. It was as if she had done it as a retaliation. She brought Duran into her bed.

At the time, Duran had been 19 years old. However, this hadn't been his first experience. At the time, Duran was over 2 meters tall, and he was a massive man with taut muscles. He also had a well-defined and handsome face. He had received countless lustful gazes from the females.

After a passionate night session, she always wanted Duran's body.

She started showing strong possessiveness, so he had to sever all his relationships with the slave women. If a female slave tried to seduce Duran over any lingering attachment, the female slave would receive severe punishments.

However, nothing else had changed aside from the sex. She still whipped him when she vented her anger, and she didn't hesitate to verbally abuse him.

However, Duran calmly accepted such a relationship. It wasn't as if he liked it. He just didn't have a choice.

The problem was... Even though the slave was the victim, he would be treated as the bigger sinner if he did anything against the assailant.

‘How dare you touch my daughter! I forgave you of your past transgression, yet you spat on my generosity? You dared to touch my daughter?’

She had become pregnant with Duran’s child.

It was a natural outcome. The two of them had mingled their bodies together whether it was day or night. Wouldn’t it be more strange if a baby hadn’t formed?

When the truth was revealed, the entire household was flipped on its head.

In the morning, Duran had been working as an attendant. He didn’t know the reason behind it, but he was given a beating before his bloodied body was dragged into the yard.

She was there too. She looked at Duran with tear-filled eyes. Duran had expected nothing out of his life, but her words shattered Duran’s heart into pieces.

‘H...he threw his body in front of me to save me. I kept him by my side as a favor, yet... When we were out of sight, he forced me to... Ooh-hoohk. I was so scared that I wasn’t able to tell anyone...’

Duran wasn’t the only one, who was dumbfounded by her words. They had made sure her parents didn’t hear about it, but the whole household had known about the illicit affair. It wouldn’t be too

far-fetched if her family members also suspected what was going on.

However, the truth didn't matter to them. A lowly slave had dared to mingle his body with his daughter. Duran deserved to die.

They said Duran's sin was too large for them to give Duran a clean death. They beat him until he was a wreck. After throwing salt on his wounds, they chained him up in the basement prison cell. This process would continue everyday until he would die.

It was on the fourth day. Duran cursed himself for not taking his own life earlier. Now his entire body was restrained with steel chains, and there was a wooden stick put between his teeth. He couldn't kill himself by biting off his own tongue.

However, on the fourth day, a miracle had occurred.

No one came for him in the morning. Instead, he could hear explosions and screams coming from outside.

What was going on out there?

He was curious, but all he could do was wait for his inevitable death.

A Dragon Demon appeared in front of him.



‘Those bastards were very vicious. This man committed no sin, yet they treated him like this. Maybe I was too merciful in how I killed them.’

The Dragon Demon had exterminated the owner and his family. The one, who had rescued Duran, was named Saibein. He was the son of the great Dragon Demon King Atein.

The reason why Saibein knew about Duran’s situation was simple. There had been Dragon Demon King worshippers inside the household.

Duran hadn’t know this at the time, but the worship of the Dragon Demon King was pretty widespread amongst the slaves. The feelings he felt during his lifetime was a fertile soil for accepting this new faith. The world decried the worship of the Dragon Demon king as evil, yet wasn’t the people who made those statements also part of an irrational and evil social structure?

‘Humans are all equal. The determination of a person’s status at birth is a tool used by the evil men. The true barometer of one’s status shouldn’t be determined this way. The Dragon Demon race were born superior to the humans. The true way is for the Dragon Demons to guide the humans from above them. This is how the world should be structured.’

Duran had been about to face the end after living an unreasonable life. Duran was willing to believe. He decided to dedicate his life to the faith of the Dragon Demon King, which had save his life.

Forty years had passed since that day.

Duran desperately grew his power, and in a rare move, a human was allowed to reside in the Plain of Darkness. The Dragon Demons with the royal blood, and the Dragon Majin respected him for his martial prowess and position. They kept their manners.

He had fought in countless battles, and he had killed countless enemies in each battle.

He was living a life soaked in blood, but he had no regrets. He wanted to create the correct world, and he sacrificed everything for the day when his great savior would return.

From Duran's perspective, he couldn't forgive those that rejected the truth. He couldn't forgive those that defended this unreasonable world.

## 10

The world viewed the Dragon Demon king worshippers as religious fanatics. They were akin to worshippers of evil. These worshippers had deified the Dragon Demon King, and they believed he would return from his death. They had an ironclad belief that he'll right the wrongs of the world.

However, not everyone in the organizations held such beliefs.

These false Dragon Demon king worshippers hid their true intent as they mingled into the rest of the world. As time passed, these people developed different goals separate from their organization.

Of course, the Dragon Demon king worshippers didn't forgive such beings. The organization systematically revealed those that no longer shared common goals with them, and there would be no forgiveness. Duran had killed countless betrayers amongst their ranks of Dragon Demon king worshippers.

This was why he didn't show any change in expression in front of a man, who might be better off dead right now. The betrayer was in an appalling state. Duran grabbed the man by his neck as he spoke with a rage-filled voice.

“Yuren. Where's the wicked traitor, who has the name seeped in sin?”

# Chapter 92 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (1)

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1

The harsh winter that had frozen the whole world had come to an end. As the new years passed, the snow and ice started to melt. Greens could be seen everywhere.

It was the 4th month of the year, and the color of spring was out in full force... Azell finally decided to go on a long journey.

‘Now that I think about it, it’s been exactly 1 year.’

The thought came over Azell as he looked out the window. He had woken up in the Balan Forest one year ago today. He had gone through a lot after he woke.

If he had his way, he would have left much earlier. However, he had made relationships here, and he had a lot of things he had to do before he could leave his friends.

In the past 3 months, Azell and Kairen had focused on their training. Azell had taught a lot of things to Kairen. In turn, Kairen passed on the knowledge to Arrieta, Seigar and Giles.

Three month could be considered to be long or it could be considered to be short depending one’s perspective. However,

everyone's ability increased drastically in this period of time. The chaos caused by the fall of the Nadick Empire, the Great Darkness and the machination of the Dragon Demon King worshippers had caused the loss of concepts and techniques. They had the very rare opportunity to learn these lost concepts and techniques from Azell.

"I'll be leaving."

Azell didn't have much to pack. Usually, people packed heavily for a long trip, but Azell only packed the items he thought were a necessity.

"Hmm. Are you really going to leave?"

When Azell came out with his pack, Giles was waiting for him with a question.

Azell replied.

"Yes. In truth, I've been here too long."

"I want to thank you for all you have taught me. I don't know how I'll repay this kindness."

"It is hardly necessary to say such a thing."

In the past, techniques were exchanged and shared during the Dragon Demon War. He just did something that would have

occurred during that time.

He had woken up after a long sleep, and he had developed valuable relationship with these people. However, they weren't his family or his students.

“I'm sure there will come a time when you'll need power. I want you to choose trustworthy people, and you should build up your ranks.”

He didn't have to teach them, but he felt that it was a necessary task. This was why he hadn't hold back in his teachings. He was sure the remnants of darkness was roiling beneath the surface of the world, and there will come a time when it'll wake up once again. Even a single person, who would fight alongside him, would be a boon for him.

Giles nodded his head.

“I will do my best.”

Azell patted Giles' shoulder once, and he exited the corridor.

When he arrived at the front door, Arrieta, Seigar and Enora was waiting for him.

Arrieta spoke. She had on a slightly sullen expression as she spoke. It was an expression that one never saw on her, and it made her look her age. Azell unconsciously smiled at the sight.

“Is it true that you aren’t taking the horse I gifted you?”

“Yes. I appreciate the thought, but a horse is too slow.”

Azell grinned as he spoke. This was the reason why he didn’t have much luggage. Azell didn’t plan on traveling like a normal traveler. He planned on running to his destination in the shortest amount of time.

Arrieta burst out laughing as if he had said something absurd.

“You said a horse is slow... If people don’t already know you, people will think you are crazy.”

“Fortunately, you know me.”

“Yes. It is unfortunate, but you are right. If I knew this would have happened, I would have prepared something else.”

“It is the thought that counts.”

Azell grinned. Arrieta spoke that way, but it wasn’t as if he hadn’t received anything from her. He was given travel money, and the amount was much more than he needed.

Azell suddenly felt a gaze on him, so he looked to the side. Seigar was also looking at him with a sullen expression.

Unlike the others, the relationship between Azell and Seigar never improved. When he arrived at the Dukedom of Taranton, Seigar had suffered a thorough defeat at the hands of Azell. Afterwards, Seigar acknowledged Azell's superiority, but he never displayed a friendly attitude. This was why Azell had made no efforts in trying to become friendly with Seigar. He had no reason to make such overture.

Still, he had learned a lot from Azell, so there was respect in Seigar's attitude. Segiar spoke as he brought up his hand.

"I'll pray for your success in future battles. I'll work hard, so I can vindicate myself next time we meet."

"I'll look forward to it."

Azell still smiled as he shook Seigar's hand.

Enora stayed still until that moment. She was of lesser station, and she couldn't open her mouth until she was prompted by a person of higher rank. Azell was aware of this fact, so he initiated the conversation.

"When I see you next, Ms Enora would have grown into a slender lady. Since Ms Enora is great at your work, you'll probably be a veteran maid for the royal family. I bet you'll have a lot of people working for you by that time."



“Are you planning on not coming back for that long?”

Enora asked with round eyes. The new year had come, but her birthday was in the summer. She was only a 14 year old girl. She was in the midst of her puberty, so she had grown a lot from the time he had met her. However, she was still a young girl, who still hadn't lost her baby fat. If he planned on seeing her when she was a slender lady, how many years was he talking about?

Azell laughed.

“Well, it'll be great if I get to see you before that happens. Anyways... I owe a lot to Ms Enora.”

“At least, you are aware of it.”

After giving his farewell to Enora, he also gave a farewell to Havanz and the staffs of the estate. Finally, he searched for Kairen. Havanz let out a bitter laugh as he told Azell to head outside.

“You are too slow. By the time you finish your farewell, the day might come to an end.”

Kairen had come out early, and he had been waiting for Azell. The problem was the clothes he was wearing.

Azell queried.

“...are you going somewhere today, Duke?”

Kairen wore his armor, and he had equipped his two Dragon Swords. He was fully armed. Moreover, he had on a magic tool that hid his horns, pointed ears, and the Dragon Stone. He was disguised as a human knight. On top of it all, he had a travel pack strapped to his back. No matter how one looked at it, it looked as if Kairen was planning on leaving for a trip.

Kairen spoke.

“I’m guessing you are going to the former county of Karzark. I believe you are going to a region taken over by monsters.”

“...duke?”

“I have talented people under me, so my territory will be managed well even if I’m not here. Don’t worry about it. You know how talented Havanz is. Even if I’m gone for an extended amount of time, it won’t be a problem.”

“No. Wait a moment...”

Azell furrowed his brows. He had never considered this scenario. Kairen was one of the great nobles of this country. He was a shield that protected the people from the Dragon Demon King worshippers, and he was a member of the Guardian Shadows. Azell never expected someone of his personage to just follow him.

However, no one seemed surprised by his intentions. It seemed Kairen had told them about his decision beforehand.

Azell sighed as he asked the question.

“Are you serious about this?”

“Of course, I’m serious. I hid it, because I wanted to see your expression. I have a legitimate reason, so don’t look at me as if I’m some thoughtless child.”

“...you accurately figured out what I was feeling, and I want to thank you for packaging your words in such a manner.”

Kairen ignored Azell’s words as he explained the reasons behind this move.

“As a member of the Guardian Shadows, I’ve fought against the Dragon Demon King worshippers.... I have a gut feeling that I have to go with you.”

“.....”

“I feel as if your existence and what I experienced recently portends the beginning of something big. It is not my style to be in the dark. I don’t want to react and cope with the situation blindly. If I stay with you, I have a feeling that I’ll be able to get to the heart of this problem.”

Kairen didn't lie. He told the truth. Kairen had fought the Dragon Demon king worshippers for over several dozen years, yet he had never been able to get to the core of the problem. On top of it all, he didn't even know the real identity of his own organization.

However, events started to change rapidly when Azell came into the scene. The real identities of his enemies were slowly peeled away, and he was able to find out about the Guardian Shadow's secret.

So how could he not follow after Azell?

He wasn't patient enough to step away from a fight, and wait for the result to come out. He always ran to the heart of a fight, and he dictated the result with his own hands. This was why he was the living legend of the Rulain kingdom. This was why he was called the Dragon Sword Duke.

After listening to Kairen's determined words, Azell looked at him for a brief moment. In the end, he had to laugh.

"If you are resolute on this, I won't say no to you. I just feel a bit sorry for Mr. Havanz."

"The Duke has done this many times before. Please look out for the Duke."

Havanz spoke with a voice mixed with a sigh.

This was how the two men left the Dukedom. They would have to cross two borders, but in Azell's mind, the distance didn't seem too far away. Kairen and Azell crossed mountains and plains as they ran like the wind.

## 2

The forest had been calm and still only an hour ago, and the darkness of the night ruled over the land. However, an explosion accompanied by fire shattered the darkness, and the fire started to spread.

Duran put on the appearance of the Black Knight as he conducted a slaughter within the forest.

“Ah-ahk!”

As the flames burned the forest, Duran cut down a boy that hadn't even reached puberty. He had killed the boy with a single strike, and he immediately headed towards his next target.

At that moment, a blue thunder struck Duran, and it stalled his advance.

Gwah-gwah-gwahng!

“Hmmm.”

If he was a normal human being, he would have died on the spot. However, Duran used the Insulation technique to ground the electricity. He glared at his enemy.

The enemy was a young girl. A freckled young girl was shaking in fright.

“Can’t you tell your resistance is useless? It’ll be easier for you if you accept this.”

The girl flinched at his words, which had come out like a sigh. She raised her magical energy. She was young, but she was a magician with enormous magical power.

Pah-hahk!

However, she looked inexperienced and lacking in front of Duran. Before her concentrated magical energy could do anything, his sword cut her throat open. She fell as blood sprayed out of her. Her eyes were wide open.

“You evil bastard!”

A bloodied young man cried out in despair, and he approached Duran from the side. He wasn’t a magician. He was a Spirit Order practitioner like Duran.

“You threw away your faith, and you killed your master. How dare an immoral person like you say such a thing to me.”

Duran spoke as he easily parried the other's sword strike. Fire burned within the young man's eyes.

“You are a crazy devil! You aren't qualified to talk about immorality and duty!”

“You are wrong. You guys are the ones that are crazy. You had the chance to follow the true faith, yet you voluntarily turned away from it.”

The young man used to be a prospect that the Dragon Demon king worshippers had groomed for his combat potential. He had been indoctrinated with the true faith from a young age, yet he had killed his teacher. He had tried to escape with the others.

However, this young man wasn't the true mastermind behind the escape attempt.

The young man was lured away by sweet talk, and he had committed a deadly sin. He was a pitiable soul. Duran knew this, so he asked a question.

“Yuren chose to take up the name seeped in sin. What did this evil traitor do to you all? What words caused you to commit such foolish actions?”

Yuren was recently causing a lot of problem within the ranks of the Dragon Demon king worshippers. He had killed all his comrades affiliated with the organization he was affiliated with, and now he was on the run. Moreover, he was going around destroying the bases connected to his organization.

The problem was the fact there was no strict structure to how the Dragon Demon king worshippers were organized. This was why even the ruling class in the Plain of Darkness wasn't able to keep up with all the activities of the various organizations.

However, Yuren was able to find out the overlapping points in these organizations, and he continued to attack the Dragon Demon King worshippers.

From the perspective of the Dragon Demon king worshippers, Yuren's action was so astounding that words didn't even come out of their mouths.

Until a year ago, Yuren had been a prospect placed in a secret training facility for magicians. Basically, he hadn't even been officially recognized as a magician.

Moreover, he was only a 20 years old human. Unlike the Dragon Majin, he hadn't been born with naturally high reservoir of magic. Moreover, he was only an apprentice, so he hadn't received any valuable knowledge. The valuable techniques were only given when one did something of merit.



Despite all of that, Yuren had already killed Dragon Demon king worshippers in the hundreds. There were many Dragon Majin included in this number.

‘I don’t understand that bastard.’

Duren still haven’t seen Yuren in person. It was only in recent days that the upper management had inserted high quality individuals like Duran.

As Duran followed the traces left behind Yuren, Duran was getting further away from understanding this young man.

In the first place, why did Yuren betray the Dragon Demon king worshippers? Moreover, how was he able to improve his skills so much? However, as time passed, Duran didn’t worry about such thoughts.

“We now know the truth. We know how crazy and evil you guys are!”

The real problem was the existence like the young man pointing his sword towards Duran.

The human Dragon Demon King worshippers were divided into two categories. There were the humans nurtured within the organizations. Then there were the humans akin to Duran. The truth was told to an outsider, and this human outsider became a convert.

The children nurtured from within were mostly orphans. They were indoctrinated with the beliefs of the Dragon Demon King worshippers from the time they were able to talk. The children were indoctrinated in a completely controlled environment, so they shouldn't have any selfish desires.

However... Something had happened to Yuren, and it made him have a change in heart.

‘Even if was a magic that affected the mind, it would take a very long time and massive effort to change an inflexible mind. So how is this possible?’

“Die!”

Duran held the question in his heart as he looked at the young man, who swung his sword. The young man didn't care about his own safety. His strike had the intent of taking both of them out. However...

“You are foolish until end.”

Before the young man could swing his sword, Duran's sword sliced through the young man's neck.

After the teen fell, Duran approached a young Dragon Majin. The Dragon Majin youth was wearing the same armor as Duran. He spoke.

“Yuren is on the run with the cold-blooded queen.”

Duran was an exception. He was a human given that was given a high rank. Naturally, he had command over both humans and Dragon Majins. Everyone knew about Duran’s skill and accomplishments, so no one objected to his command. They respected him.

“Did they get to safety as they threw these powerless children into the maw of a Dragon?”

“I don’t think that is entirely true.....”

At his words, the young Dragon Majin let out a bitter laugh. Duran looked at him with a puzzled expression.

“Mmm?”

# Chapter 93 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (2)

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3

Yuren didn't know the exact moment when he became a Dragon Demon king worshipper.

His earliest memory he could remember was the cold corpse of his mother. He didn't know the exact cause, but his mother had been sick and poor. She froze to death in a back alley of a city.

Yuren was probably fated to die like his mother. However, someone had taken Yuren, who was unable to speak yet. He was sent to a training school for talented humans.

He learned how to speak in this place. He grew up being indoctrinated with the knowledge and mindset of the Dragon Demon King worshippers. At an early age, the trainers categorized the children depending on their aptitude. In this process, Yuren was put on the path to becoming a magician.

When he was young, he never questioned the environment he was in. He completely believed everything the adults told him. It was truth. He was steadily becoming a fanatic.

His first kill came at 9 years old. The Dragon Demon king worshippers wanted to take root in a particular city. He had to kill an old couple, who refused to give up control over a

neighbourhood.

When he thought back on it, the couple was blameless, and they had been kind to children. He had used their kindness against them. On a cold day, Yuren had disguised himself as an orphan. The couple allowed him into their home, and they had provided him warm soup. He had used this opportunity to put a strong magical poison in the couple's meal. He had killed them.

Afterwards, he didn't feel any emotions.

Yuren had received the teachings of the great Dragon Demon King, and anyone that didn't follow it wasn't considered to be 'human.' They were dirty trashes that propped up this false world.

However, a change occurred when he was 14 years old.

One day an unknown voice started to whisper to him in his dreams.

'I will tell you the name of your bloodline. Yuren Rizester.'

".....mmm."

Yuren opened his eyes. The green eyes that shown beneath the disheveled brown hair surveyed his surrounding.

His field of vision was shaking. It was disorienting. It seemed he

was being moved, and he was slung over someone's shoulder.

"I'm being carried on a woman's shoulder.... How refreshing..."

"If you have the energy to spout such bullshit, it seems you are fine."

A sharp voice answered him. Someone had slung Yuren over her shoulder.

It was a woman that was smaller than Yuren. Her black hair was cut into an even bob, and she was wearing a leather armor painted black. She was a cold beauty with yellowish red eyes.

She was a Dragon Majin. There was a sculpture-like horn above her right ear, and it was give out a red light. A Dragon Stone of the same color was embedded on the back of her hand.

Yuren spoke with a tired voice.

"Leticia. I'm glad you are happy, but... This might be the last bullshit statement I'll be able to utter in this life.... I don't know if...."

"I'm starting to think that might be preferable to this. You should stop speaking. You did something idiotic, yet you aren't dead. You know you are lucky to be alive even after losing so much blood. Just shut up."

“The child.....?”

“He’s dead.”

“.....”

Yuren’s face crumpled at Leticia’s words.

He was seriously injured. He had been running away with the children. His feet were shackled since he had to protect the children. He had thrown his body in the way of a sword thrust as he had tried to save a child. He fainted after receiving a deep sword wound.

“I should have... If we left them alone, then...”

“Don’t say those words again. Shut up.”

“.....”

“Even a smart person couldn’t have predicted the outcome. We did this despite knowing we might regret it later. However, those children were heading down the road to fanaticism, and their dignity as human were being stripped away. We can’t just do nothing about it.”

The current situation had occurred, because Yuren had aimed to

go after the most evil training facility run by the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Basically, it wasn't a simple training facility that nurtured regular fighters. It was a place where children with special constitution were gathered, and evil experimentation was conducted on them. This was a place where they 'reared' the test subjects, so Yuren couldn't just pass it by.

While he was doing his advance work, he became acquainted with Leticia. They decided to do a joint operation. After they conducted their advance work for a month, they had destroyed the institution, and the children were able to escape.

However, something unexpected had happened. Pursuers showed up behind Yuren as if they had been waiting for him.

It took Yuren much effort to speak.

“Let me down.....”

“You aren't in a condition to walk.”

“I know. However, you are....”

Yuren had picked up on the fact that Leticia was also injured. Yuran and Leticia had fought and killed over 100 Dragon Demon king worshippers to be able to get here. It would be more strange if they weren't tired and wounded.

“I'm not in such a bad shape that I won't be able to carry a



human cub.”

“No... I don’t think you can face this enemy with me on your shoulder.... Nope....”

“...enemy?”

Leticia was startled by his words. She had enough Qi to make the Dragon Demon king worshippers shake in their boots. However, she hadn’t sensed any enemies approaching them. What did Yuren sense?

At the same time, Leticia felt someone looking down at her. She had learned the Gaze Detection technique.

‘Was the person’s gaze hidden? No. No one had been watching me until a moment ago!’

The enemies had just appeared, so it meant that they had been lying in ambush at this location. The enemies hadn’t been looking at the two of them. However, when the two entered their sensory field, they had turned their gazes towards the two.

When Leticia realized this fact, lightning struck.

Ggah-gwah-gwahng! Ggwah-gwahng!

It wasn’t just one or two thunderbolts. The forest was bright

from the fire, yet the light from the thunderbolts was able to burn their retinas. Dozens of lightning fell.

It had the destructive power to take out a unit with scores of men. After a moment, two people walked out from the dispersing thunder.

“Kook. This is... Did a high ranking officer come after us?”

“That’s right, sinners. I commend you for getting out of our trap.”

A person stepped out from between the trees. A woman of the Dragon Demon race was encircled in darkness as she emitted enormous power. The heat was causing the air to flow, and it flutter the black hair of the woman.

“Niberis... A direct descendent of the Dragon Demon king.....”

“Mmmm?”

The Dragon Demon woman was Niberis. It seemed the beings in the Plains of Darkness had accepted Yuren as a serious problem. They had sent a high ranking member.

Niberis’ expression hardened.

“How were you able to recognize me? You should only be a minor

apprentice.”

Even amongst the Dragon Demon king worshippers, Niberis wasn't known to many people. One didn't know about her unless one lived in the Plains of Darkness. When she travelled outside, she had put considerable amount of energy in covering up her identity. On her last mission, she had travelled to the Rulain kingdom to kidnap the Dragon Demon Princess Arietta with Regina. Even then she took the precaution of paralyzing the minds of the rank and file members, so they wouldn't be able to see her appearance.

However, Yuren had gotten her identity right as soon as he saw her. A minor member of an organization shouldn't know about her.

Yuren laughed.

“Hahaha... Who knows? What do you think.....?”

“You are almost dead, yet you have the talent to get on my nerves.”

Goo-goo-goo-goo-goo!

The darkness surrounding Niberis moved in a furious manner. It was a darkness that caused anyone that got close to it to be cursed. It was hard for anyone to breathe in this darkness. Once one was in the darkness, one died from all kinds of poisons and diseases.

“What nonsense.”

It was a cursed darkness that would make a human magician freeze from the sight of it. However, Leticia spoke in a cold voice. She swung her long spear with Yuren still on her shoulder.

Shweeeee!

When she did, a gale with deep blue chill rose up to push the darkness away. As the temperature dropped rapidly, ice started to form in the surrounding.

Niberis glared at Leticia.

“As expected of the cold-blooded queen, you have a trick or two that justifies your pretentious nickname.”

“You guys are the ones that came up with that lousy nickname.”

Amongst the Dragon Demon king worshippers, Leticia was known as the ‘cold-blooded queen’. She had started her activities 8 years ago, and she had killed countless Dragon Demon king worshippers including a good number of Dragon Demon officers.

Niberis spoke.

“I see. Then you should consider it an honor and die.”

Numerous magical spells were initiated from within the darkness surrounding her. When it looked as if thunderbolts would end, a sharp wind flew in. When the winds fell away, fire came down like rain.

“Didn’t I tell you this is nonsensical? Did you already forget my words?”

Leticia overcame all the magical spells. She still had Yuren slung over one shoulder, yet she was moving in a surprising manner. Leticia counterattacked as she moved to regions that weren’t influenced by the magical spells.

Kwahng!

As the explosion rang out, Niberis’ barrier shook. Niberis was taken aback.

‘She was able to do that at this distance?’

Niberis had put a good amount of distance between her enemies. However, her barrier had cracked as if someone had struck at point blank range at full force. Moreover, another blow accurately struck the crack before Niberis could do anything about it.

“Ooh-ook!”

Niberis had barely avoided the blow. It was terrifying. She had put a lot of effort into making her multi-layered barrier, yet a dozen consecutive attack was intricately focused on a single point. Her barrier had been pierced by the attacks.

At the same time, Niberis realized she had made a mistake.

‘It is a magical spell.’

The attack from before wasn’t from Leticia. It was a magical spell from Yuren, who looked as if he was close to death. When she realized this fact, Niberis was taken aback.

‘This makes no sense. A human did that?’

The attack that was sent a moment ago astounded Niberis. Was it really a magical spell used by a human?

“This can’t be!”

Niberis was still in doubt as she sent her magical spell. At the same time....

Puh-uhng!

An explosion rang out, and the barrier, which she had remade, shook again. As if her opponent had been waiting for her to send her magic, Yuren had sent a perfect counter attack. The construct

of her magical spell was nullified before it could take shape. Moreover, a magic arrow came at her from an absolute blind spot. It threaded the needle before it impacted on Niberis.

‘A human cub has this level of skill....’

At that point, Niberis shivered instead of getting angry. This human’s applied magic was at a level that was akin to the Archmages that taught magic in the Plain of Darkness.

Niberis asked a question.

“Oh traitor Yuren. Is it as I had suspected? Is the Guardian Shadows behind your activities?”

“Maybe... If I really had something like that backing me up.... It would have been much easier for me.....”

Yuren’s laugh didn’t have much strength behind it. Until he developed a working relationship with Leticia, he had strictly moved on his own. However, from the perspective of the Dragon Demon king worshippers, they didn’t believe he worked alone.

First, he was too talented of a magician. Even Niberis was surprised by his skills.

Even if one was a genius in magic, one’s development was dependent on the knowledge one could learn. If Yuren’s foundation was solid, he could rapidly develop by learning high

rank magic, but who taught it to him? If he was self-taught, he would have to fill in the gap in his knowledge through research and hard work. Of course, the progress was incredibly less efficient than learning the already well-established knowledge.

Yuren suddenly spoke.

“Leticia. Someone else...is coming here....”

“Understood.”

Leticia understood the meaning behind Yuren’s words.

Their surrounding was already crawling with Dragon Demon king worshippers that had chased after them. However, the ‘someone’ mentioned by Yuren had enough battle capability to be a threat to the two of them.

“I’m going overtax myself a little bit. I’m guessing you are well enough to assist me?”

Hooooooooo!

After speaking those words, Leticia planted her spear into the ground. Thin ice coated the surface of the spear, and it let out a maelstrom of cold energy.

An incredible amount of magic was being gathered.



The more surprising part was the source of the magical energy. Leticia was emitting Dragon Demon Magic, and another source of magical butted in to cause a multiplicative effect.

It was Yuren's magic. A magical pattern that perfectly complemented Leticia's Dragon Demon magic was formed, and it was amplifying her power to the extreme. There were cases where a magician used support magic to amplify a warrior's magical energy, but the effect of this amplification transcended common sense.

Leticia grinned as she pulled out her spear, and she brought it down once again.

“Awesome. Even if my body was in a normal state, I would have hard time generating this much power.”

Kwah-ha-ha-ha-ha!

Afterwards, a wave of cold air erupted as it was shot forward.

A white energy was shot forward, and a several dozen meters of the surrounding region was frozen in the shape of a fan.

‘Oh my.....!’

Niberis had been barely able to react to it, and she was

astonished. Surprisingly, her sight line was obstructed. Her barrier reacted to antagonist forces, and a thick layer of ice had formed around her barrier. It blocked her field of vision.

Moreover, a more stronger cold energy impacted on top of the first attack.

Kwah-kwah-kwah-kwah!

However, this attack had a frightening force behind the attack. Niberis' barrier shook violently as the temperature fell rapidly.

After the last wave of cold energy impacted Niberis, an ice pillar had formed where she stood.

“...no wonder she is called the cold-blooded queen.”

It took her a good amount of time for her to get out the ice pillar encasing her. When she exited it, she mumbled as she looked at her surrounding.

Everything was frozen. It was as if she was in a field of ice. A portion of the burning forest was frozen white, and one could see large ice pillars had formed intermittently.

“Miss!”

A person jumped over an ice pillar. He was an enormous man

wearing black armor. It was Duran. He queried her.

“Are you hurt anywhere?”

“I’m not hurt. However, it seems I got punched. They aren’t to be underestimated. We can’t hold anything back when we meet them again.”

Niberis hadn’t underestimated Leticia in the first place. Niberis had spoke disparagingly towards her, but Leticia was acknowledged to be a strong foe by the Plain of Darkness. She had accepted this fact as she started the fight.

However, she hadn’t expected the unpredictable variable called Yuren. He was at death’s door, yet he was able to display such magic.

Niberis asked a question.

“What about the others?”

“They aren’t here yet.”

Duran was quick on the uptake, so he realized the intent behind her question.

She wasn’t the only one dispatched to catch the traitor Yuren. It meant she didn’t hold autonomy over this mission. Her

competitors from various factions were all aiming for Yuren. They were fighting for the meritorious deed of killing Yuren.

This happened, because those in the Plain of Darkness couldn't track down Yuren's trail. Yuren was elusive. He had lead pursuers on a wild goose chase numerous times before he disappeared.

This was why the Plain of Darkness had dispatched high ranking members to each region. Moreover, if one was able to kill Yuren, it would be seen as a large meritorious deed. Niberis was at this place, because Duran had been dogged at tracking down Yuren. She had received information about Yuren first.

However, she was only slightly ahead of the others. The fact that she was tracking down Yuren would be notified to the people above her. Soon her competitors would gather here.

Niberis spoke.

"I won't allow Laura and Kieren a chance to butt into this affair."

"Yes."

Duran lowered his head.

# Chapter 94 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (3)

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4

Azell and Kairen was almost at their destination. It had only been two weeks since they left the Dukedom of Tarantos.

It took them four days to move past the border of the Rulain Kingdom into the Dailan Kingdom. It took them the next four days to traverse through the Dailan kingdom, and they had entered into the Bijes Kingdom. In the past, it used to be called the County of Karzark.

If someone said they crossed two kingdoms in a week, one would think it was a bad joke. However, the two of them cut straight across the map. They traveled a distance of 300 km in a straight line.

When they entered the the Bijes Kingdom, their speed slowed a little bit. They knew where the County of Karzark was located at, but they needed to do some investigation before they went there. This was why they listened to stories from old men, and they searched out nobles, who collected books. They searched for historical records.

Since they had crossed the borders without permission, they weren't truthful with their own identities. However, they had the seals proclaiming them of being knights, so they just needed to come up with a decent lie. The lie and seals was enough to be

treated like guests for a night at a noble's house.

Kairen took charge in telling Azell what to do. In the past, Kairen had traveled around the continent with his identity hidden. He was used to traveling as a noble with a hidden identity.

Kairen spoke.

“We'll be there by afternoon.”

After gathering information, the two of them visited a town nearby the County of Karzark. Since the town was near the Cursed lands, it wasn't prosperous. However, it was a place where they could eat and rest.

“Yes.”

As they got closer to the County of Karzark, Azell spoke less and less. Kairen wasn't used to this version of Azell, but he left Azell alone. Kairen didn't want to be a nuisance.

The County of Karzark had been the place that had allowed Azell to settle in peace. After the Dragon Demon wars, he needed to rest his weary body, and he had started a new life....

Of course, it had been a short and fragile dream. In only two years after the war, the Dragon Demon King's curse had taken hold, and he had to leave his land. He was put to sleep.

Azell still wanted to see his land. He understood that he had been asleep for 220 years, but he had wanted to see if anything remained from his memories. He had wanted to see how his descendants fared in the land they inherited.

“.....”

However, this simple hope had already been broken into pieces. There was nothing he could gain by going there, yet... He had to see it with his own eyes.

Azell wordlessly stared at the location that was considered to be the County of Karzark. The stories he had heard up until now ran through his head.

‘The Great Darkness....’

If one talked about the current era, this event never failed to come up.

The County of Karzark had fallen to ruins at the end of the Great Darkness. Many lives were taken from the spread of an infectious disease, but the situation had been stabilizing thanks to sage Baion. This was when the crazed Dragons attacked the County of Karzark.

According to the records, 13 crazed Dragons went on a rampage, and they attacked everything within the County of Karzark. Afterwards, a massive horde of monsters gathered in the land. It

was as if they had been hypnotized.

After the fame of hero Azell Karzark, the County of Karzark was famous for their strong troops. Their knights were of high quality, and they possessed a lot of talented magicians. Of course, the soldiers were also trained well.

However, they couldn't do anything in front of this situation. In a flash, the County of Karzark was laid to waste, and the monsters started to spread outwards.

Fortunately , the Dragons didn't join in when the monsters advanced.

After a desperate fight put up by the County of Karzark, the number of berserker Dragons had been cut down in half, and the rest of the Dragons refused to come out of the County of Karzark.

The Bijes kingdom had been weakened by the Great Darkness, and they suffered further damages from the monsters.

From the stories told by the old timers, Azell learned that the kingdom had been at the brink of destruction.

However, in the end, they were able to endure the threat, and the County of Karzark was designated as a Cursed land. The Bijes Kingdom built a fortress at the border.

It was akin to the Rulain Kingdom's Southern Border Fortress...



This was obvious, but the County of Karzark was a forbidden region, and people were barred from entering the place. The border guards kept up a regular patrol along the border.

However, Azell and Kairen didn't have a hard time avoiding detection. They were able to sneak past the borders between kingdoms, so this was child's play.

Kairen mumbled to himself.

"It hasn't changed much since my last visit. The fortress is still the same."

"Have you been here before?"

"I think it was around 30 years ago. It was after we destroyed the Grand Alliance of Darkness lead by Dakan."

".....Hmmm. It is an answer that really drives home the fact that there is a great disparity in age between us."

Now that he thought about it, Kairen was an eyewitness to what had happened in the Great Darkness. At the time, Kairen still would have been the Duke of Tarantos, so he probably knew how the Great Darkness shook the foundation of society.

Azell asked the question as they walked within the County of Karzark. He wasn't really interested in the answer. He asked the question, because he wanted to be distracted from his turbulent heart.

“What was the Great Darkness like?”

“At the time... Everything was a mess..”

A contagious disease had swept through the continent, and it had been too ghastly. Until sage Baion came up with a solution, no one knew how to deal with the disease. If one caught the disease, one was quarantined, and the only thing left was to wait and die. That was the only choice available to the sick.

“No one was immune from it.”

The Dragon Demons, Dragon Majins, famous knights and magicians were all powerless in front of the virulent disease. If one caught the disease, one could only look forward to death.

“Of course, the Dragon Demons, Dragon Majins and the strong knights had great resistance against the disease, but.....”

Even that had its limit. In the end, their stamina was chipped away slowly, and they fell sick. It was the end for them too.

In fact, their presence actually accelerated the spread of this infectious disease. Since they had more resistance against this sickness, it took them longer to realize that they were sick compared to normal people. These beings met with other unsuspecting people, and it acted as a catalyst to spur the rate of infection.

Kairen continued to speak.

“From what I remember, the temples used to be quite prideful. If I told my old self about how humble the priests are right now, there is no way my old self would believe it.”

Before the Great Darkness, the temples held absolute power. They used the Holy knowledge and techniques passed down by the gods to treat diseases and wounds. This made the priests act high and mighty.

However, during the Great Darkness, they had been powerless. They had been prideful as they claimed that they’ll be able to cure the disease in a short period of time. The priests, who had stepped forward, died from the disease instead. It was unknown how many priests died during that time, but it was numerous.

“Then there were the priests that said the Great Darkness was a divine punishment sent to strike down the people wallowing in their arrogance. A good number of priest spouted such nonsense.”

“Somehow I get an impression that the people who spoke such nonsense in front of you didn’t go away unscathed.”

“I’ll leave what happened up to your imagination.”

Kairen grinned as he had a faraway look.

“It really was a terrible time. When I look back on it, it is hard to believe that it came to an end....”

The people laughing and talking the day before was struck down by the disease. The neighbors, who one had been good friends, were treated like monsters. People shunned the infected people. Kairen had believed in the humanity that was within people, yet any illusion of humanity was destroyed under the untreatable disease. It brought out the ugliness in people.

Azell spoke.

“...it sounds like what happens in a war.”

During the Dragon Demon War, the true character of humans had been tested. Everyone had acted as if all humans possessed humanity and benevolence. When in trouble, how many people really upheld these ideas?

Kairen let out a bitter laugh.

“In my opinion, the Great Darkness was much worse than the wars. Unlike a war, there was no opponents one could fight.”

The values everyone had believed in crumbled away, and the world was sunk into darkness. Everyone fought desperately to live. However, people didn't know what to fight. They didn't know how to fight this disease. No, it hadn't been a fight to live. It was a struggle one fought to delay one's inevitable demise.

In that era, there had been only one man, who had identified and fought against the 'enemy'.

“Baion knew what to do. He knew that he had to fight against the disease itself.”

“Have you met him before?”

“I've met him. I actually worked with him frequently when he was setting up the medical association. He had tried to gain support and help from the influential nobles. He needed a lot of political and monetary support to do what he wanted.”

“I see. Is he still alive?”

“No. He is probably dead.”

“Mmmm? You aren't sure?”

“After the medical association was established and running well, he started appearing less and less in public. Maybe, he hated being

bothered with political matters.....”

Baion had been middle-aged during the Great Darkness. If he was still alive, he would be well over 100 years old.

“I see.”

The two of them were maintaining speed of a normal person running at full tilt, while they held their conversation. The scene around them quickly changed, and they finally came to a place that held evidence of human occupation.

At a certain point in time, the ruin used to be a town.

Everything was completely destroyed, and one couldn't find anything in tact. The buildings had been burned a long time ago. Trees and grass now grew where the buildings had stood before.

Azell suddenly mumbled to himself.

“I think this place was called...Digol.”

“Mmm? What are you talking about?”

“It is the name of this town.”

Azell was swept up in an unspeakable emotion.

As a lord, he had taken care of his County for only a brief amount of time. However, he had gone all over his lands as he settled in as the lord of this land. He knew every inch of this land.

The sight he remembered superimposed itself on top of the ruins. Azell traveled far into his memory.

There were the people, who had cheered when they saw him. Then there were the innocent children, who had run around....

Digol was located at the edge of his domain, and the town had acted as a gateway to his lands. It had be fairly large, and after the Dragon Demon wars, the population had grown drastically. It had been a thriving town.

“You.....”

Kairen was about to say something to Azell, who was standing there vacantly. However, he gave up on it.

Azell’s expression had crumpled in such a frightening manner that Kairen couldn’t say anything.

Azell was the one, who broke the silence first.

“I needed targets to take out my anger on, and they are here just in time...”

Before one knew it, monsters started appearing from the surrounding. These were Orcs, who commanded ox-sized Blood Wolves.

This was to be expected. This land was designated as a Cursed land. It was so full of monsters that the Bijes Kingdom gave up on recovering this stretch of land.

While Azell and Kairen was coming here, they had avoided the detection of the monsters.

“Koo-ooh. These humans are fearless.”

A rough and awkward speech was heard. One of the Orc separated from the group, and it spoke as it walked towards the two humans.

“How fortunate.”

When Azell’s gaze landed on him, the Orc, who had been talking, flinched.

“I’ll ask this just in case. Did you come here with the wholesome intention of speaking with us?”

An indescribable anger was burning beneath his blue eyes. The Orcs were known for their grit and ferocity, yet the Orc froze for a



brief moment when it saw the man's eyes.

The Orc raised its sword as it yelled out.

“Attack!”

An unimaginable massacre, which had never been seen before, since the Orcs had settled here, was carried out.

# Chapter 95 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (4)

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6

The encounter repeated itself several times.

The County of Karzark was a pretty big stretch of land. Of course, there had been several towns and cities within the County of Karzark.

Azell walked through the towns that had been turned into ruins.

He walked past the ruins of cities where everything was destroyed. Even the castle walls were demolished.

He looked for sceneries that was left within his memories. He had always wished the beauty of these locations to last forever, yet they were all destroyed. They were in a state he had never wanted to seem them in. As he passed by each location, rage started to disappear from Azell's face. There was no expression on his face now.

He had prepared himself for such possibilities. While he was coming here, he imagined the worst case scenario, and he prepared his heart for what he'll see.

However, the shock he felt when seeing it with his own two eyes

was beyond what he had imagined.

“In the past, I’m sure.....”

Azell smelled something familiar right now. He smelled the blood that had poured out from monsters he had cut open.

“I’ve experienced something similar to this. I’ve experienced it numerous time. Still... It is quite hard to stomach.”

There were countless corpses of monsters littered around him.

Azell hadn’t bothered to hide his presence, while he was coming here. If he was able to make rational decisions, he would have avoided going to the towns or cities.

The ruins were ideal nesting ground for monsters. It was almost certain that the monsters had taken possession of all the locations where humans had resided in the past.

However, Azell didn’t avoid them. He walked through ruins as if he wanted them to see him. He attracted the monsters to him, and he had fought them.

It was a very foolish thing to do. However, Azell was wrapped up in his desire for revenge, and Kairen was swept up in the mess. However, Kairen wasn’t angry. Cold sweat was running down his body.

‘It is unbelievable. He is so overwhelming.’

Kairen had thought he was well aware of how much Qi was stored within Azell. However, he realized he had been fooling himself.

It didn’t matter if it was a violent one, careful one, small one, or a big one... In fact, it didn’t matter if they came in a group. It didn’t matter if the monsters attacked or ran away. If the monsters were close enough to be seen, they were all considered to be hostiles. Azell started his slaughter.

As he continued to fight, the commotion got larger. The monsters that had been spread out gathered to the center of the commotion.

It had been about a day and a half since they had entered the County of Karzark. Azell and Kairen had already faced several hundred monsters in the ruins of the small cities.

Koong koong koong koong koong!

The heavy sound rang out as the ground shook.

From beyond the half broken building, a house-sized Ogre appeared.

Koo-oo-uh-uh.... Uh...?

It had a habit of trying to intimidate its enemies, so it started letting out a roar. However, it was killed in the blink of an eye. Azell was already in front of it, and Azell's foot had impacted on the Ogre's chest. The impact was delivered inwards. The Ogre's heart exploded, and Azell's sword cut through its thick neck. It was as if he was cutting through pudding.

Poo-hwah-ha-ha-hahk!

A spray of blood erupted into the air. In the midst of the blood, Azell disappeared as if he was an illusion, and he attacked the group of monsters that had followed behind the Ogre.

“Koo-ahk!”

“Koo-uh-uh!”

The monsters didn't even have the time to assess what had happened. Something flashed in front of their eyes, and they fell over with a critical wound. The group of 20 monsters took only a brief moment to slaughter.

Koo-ooh-oong!

It all occurred before the Ogre's corpse could fall to the floor.

There wasn't a single speck of blood on Azell's body. Azell had moved much faster than the spray of blood. While the blood were falling down, Azell leisurely moved towards a different location.

Kairen's blood curdled as he watched Azell with interest.

'Did his rational mind erode away from the rage?'

It seemed likely, since Azell was fighting the monsters by attracting them to him.

However, when he observed Azell's fights, it made Kairen doubt his initial assumption. When one was crazy from rage, the logical and technical skills were thrown to the wind.

Shouldn't he be flailing like a madman?

Azell's fight made Kairen suspicious as to whether Azell had the ability of premonition. He integrated insight and technique flawlessly that it almost seemed mystical. He used noise and visible signs to draw in the enemies to where he wanted, and he used his mental waves to confuse them. Azell was using the minimal amount of power to kill his enemies.

He even let several of them go. He was allowing fear to spread, since it would be easier to plant illusions using Spirit Order.

He wanted to spread misinformation, so the chaos would spread. He also purposefully lured his enemies into traps.

“If there were flying monsters, it would have been a bit tiring... I guess no monsters control the skies here.”

Azell had climbed the half broken castle wall, and he spoke.

Caw, caw.....

The sun was slowing descending. Within the red glow of the sunset shining down on the land... Corpses of several hundred monsters were strewn in front of him.

The factions of monsters that had fought for dominion over this small city was all killed. Azell had killed every one of them.

Azell suddenly spoke.

“...I’m sorry.”

“At least, you were aware of what you were doing.”

Kairen let out a bitter laugh.

Azell knew what he had done was really stupid. However, he couldn’t help himself.

Kairen watched the despondent Azell through the light of the

sunset.

‘Why is he like this?’

He once again wondered about Azell’s identity. If Azell really was the descendent of the hero Azell Karzark, it was understandable for him to become enraged at the terrible sight of the County of Karzark.

However, how could he be enraged to this degree?

‘Maybe, he really is.....?’

Kairen thought back to the time when Azell discussed his own identity. He remembered the first version of the story. Azell had said he had been put into a deep sleep through Carlos’ great magic. He had woken up after a long sleep, and he was the real Azell Karzark.

It was a ridiculous story. On the other hand, it had been a detailed story, and something always nagged at him in the back of his mind.

There was no way it was possible, right?

Amongst the magicians, Archmage Carlos was worshipped like a god, but Rulain kingdom’s best magician Beorein determined it couldn’t be done.



However, as he saw more of Azell.... He couldn't help feel as if Azell's story seemed more likely.

'Maybe not... Still, it wouldn't be too strange if it really turned out to be true.'

Kairen was feeling something similar to what Arrieta and Giles was feeling. This feeling got stronger as he spent more time in Azell's presence.

Azell turned to look at Kairen as he spoke.

"I've killed all of them in this region, but more will flock here in time. Let's move to a place where we can rest."

"Mmmm. Let's do that."

At Azell's words, he suddenly woke up from his thoughts. They were moving once again, and Kairen couldn't hold back his question.

"Why did you do this?"

"I'm not sure."

Azell let out a bitter laugh.

His most precious memories had been smashed into pieces. He had skipped 220 years into the future, and Azell had thought his land would be the rope that'll connect him to the past. However, the only thing waiting for him was the traces of destruction.

The monsters had destroyed and dirtied this land. He couldn't stand these monsters acting like master of this land as they step on the corpses of the people, who used to live here. This fight was a requiem for those who died.

‘This won't be enough to appease the souls... Yes. I'll make a promise.’

At one time, Azell had ruled over this land as the lord. The deceased souls had been his vassals when they were alive. He made an oath to those people, who had been his sons and daughters.

‘I won't forgive those who carried out this deed. Moreover... I'll return this land to the hands of the people.’

He would send those, who destroyed this land, straight into hell. Whether they were Dragon Demon king worshippers or not, he didn't care. Azell promised to make this happen.

However, he couldn't tell this to Kairen. Azell made up a likely excuse.

“I just... It felt as if a holy ground had been defiled.”

“I see.”

It wasn't an excuse that was particularly believable. Kairen spoke.

“You let your anger take over your body, yet your mind was working very well. This was why I thought you had some other underlying reason you haven't told me about...”

“I would have preferred if I could just let my anger take over me.”

“So you are saying there aren't any rational reasons behind your actions?”

“Yes.”

“Still... I guess there are cases when one actually becomes calm in an intense rage. Moreover, you are a high rank Spirit Order practitioner, so you are proficient at controlling your own mind.”

“Your words aren't wrong, but it doesn't tell the whole story.”

“What is it?”

“I've seen too many innocents killed by people berserking on rage.”

“.....”

“I needed to learn to harness it. No matter how large my rage gets I had to become cold.”

Azell thought about his past. He had berserked from rage, and he had been pushed to the brink of death several times as a result. He hadn't care what was around him, and he had experienced killing his comrades in these fits of rage. He made sure he didn't get overwhelmed by such emotions anymore.

“Mmmm?”

Azell suddenly raised his head. Kairen, who had been running besides Azell, mumbled as he hardened his face.

“Someone is ‘watching’ us.”

7

There was someone watching them. This being was very far away, and this person was hidden in a very clever way. However, this person couldn't hide his gaze.

Azell spoke with Whispering instead of his voice.

-I don't think it is the border guards.

-If a normal border guard was this skilled, we would have to worry about the Bijes kingdom taking over the continent with their surprisingly strong military force.

-It couldn't be those perverted Keepers of Prophecy that used to stalk me....

It was a possibility, but the Keepers of Prophecy kept away from Azell after the rescue of Seigar.

Still, Kairen was a member of the Guardian Shadows, so his location could be discerned easily by them.

Anyways, they had found out that someone was observing them, so they couldn't just ignore it. Azell and Kairen continued a conversation about some random topic as they walked towards the place where they felt the gaze.

This was how Azell was able to confirm it.

-It is magic.

-How do you know?

-I can tell by the angle. There is a magical eye in the air.

Magic, Spirit Order and Dragon Arts all had 'far-seeing

techniques'. It wasn't merely the enhancement of one's eyesight. The technique allowed one to send one's gaze into the distance to survey a location.

When comparing the limits of these techniques, he had found that magic was much superior than Spirit Order and the Dragon Arts when using such techniques.

When Spirit Order and Dragon Arts used the far-seeing technique, one just expanded the sphere of one's vision. Azell could use his Clones to circumvent this limitation, but the limitation of the ability was clear.

On the other hand, a magician could create a magic eye, and it could be sent far away into the distance. It was at the command of the magician.

A high ranking magician could even look over a wall from a very far distance.

Kairen accepted Azell's assessment.

-I see. So that is how you can discern such information.

-I don't feel any hostility or murderous intent, but... It is hard to feel emotion through a magic eye. It is hard unless it attacks.

Azell and Kairen had been moving for a while, and they became a bit surprised.

# Chapter 96 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (5)

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-Hmmm. What is it? Is it really possible to see this far into the distance?

They were moving fairly quickly, and they had already traversed 5 kilometres. However, they hadn't reached their opponent yet. The range of the surveillance was beyond Kairen's common sense.

Azell spoke.

– This person is using a relay system of Magic Eyes.

– Relay?

– Only the very high rank magicians can use this method. It requires a high amount of skill and magical energy.

A magician could only send the Magical Eye to a distance of several hundred meters. This was why there was a limit on how high the Magical Eye could move up into the sky to look down on its surrounding.

The relay magic was a magic designed to overcome the Magic Eye's limits. The magician had to put down a marker nearby to maintain the magic, and the farthest Magic Eye links to the nearest Eye, the next Eye links to the next closest Eye, and so on. It was

possible to observe far distance using such a method.

‘This is the first time I’ve seen it since I’ve woken up.’

It was a magic used occasionally in the Dragon Demon war, but this was the time he had seen it used in this era. Azell was swept up by a queer feeling.

-We won’t be able to escape from the enemy’s surveillance using this tactic... Let’s change it up.

-How?

-That is.....

After a moment, Azell and Kairen started running at frightening speed.

At the same time, other Azells started appearing from various parts of the forest. The Clones formed by Azell possessed a presence, and the real body disappeared from sight in an instant using a Cloaking skill. He disappeared once he passed beneath a tree.

Then he increased his speed again as he ran forward faster than his Clones. His Clones were running at high speeds, but they couldn’t hold a candle to the real Azell, who was moving silently through the forest. He wanted his opponent to be caught off-guard by making his opponent think Azell was still far away. He planned



on capturing his opponent in one fell swoop.

However, his plan became obsolete the next moment.

‘The gaze disappeared?’

The Magic Eyes set up in various location vanished. It was as if the other side had given up the surveillance on them.

Kwah-ah-ahng.....!

Then he heard an explosion from the other side of the forest, and the flames brightened the darkening sky.

8

Niberis was walking through a ruined ancient castle. The sun had set, and her surrounding was becoming dark. A much deeper darkness rippled around Niberis’ body as her ebony hair billowed around her.

“I’ve read your file... I have a question I want to ask you.”

Her whole body was filled with power. As a magician, the source of her power was Darkness. When night arrived after the sun set, her powers became much stronger...

“Actually, I have an additional question I want to ask before I ask you the other question.”

“If I give you an answer... Will you let us live.....?”

Yuren replied with a labored voice.

Niberis queried.

“Do you really expect me to follow through on such a request?”

“No. However, aren’t you suppose to tell me you will?”

“You aren’t worth lying to. I have no thoughts on debasing myself by doing so.”

“Wow... You really... The arrogance suits the direct descendent of the Dragon Demon king....”

“I’ll ask my question. Why did you run away towards the land seeped in sin?”

“The way you keep referring to this place.... I’m fed up with it. This land... Why is it seeped in sin....?”

Yuren giggled.

Niberis' brow furrowed.

“It isn't as if you don't know the reason behind the name, so why are you asking? What is your purpose in coming to the land of the great sinner Azell Karzark?”

They were within the County of Karzark. Moreover, they were at the heart where the castle of Karzark was located at.

Niberis spoke.

“Did you perhaps think I wouldn't follow after you into the territory of the Dragons? You don't look that dumb...”

The County of Karzark wasn't designated as being a Cursed land just because there were a lot of monsters here. Amongst the 13 Dragons, who had destroyed this land, seven of them had taken residence here in this land. This was why Bijes kingdom had no choice but to give up on this bountiful land.

Yuren spoke.

“The knowledge... A price always follows... If you are a magician... Shouldn't you....have more sense?”

“I guess you will refuse to answer me. All right. If you want to speed up your death, I'll....”

The darkness around Niberis' body rose up like flame. At the same time, a powerful magical wave started to emanate from Yuren's body.

He suddenly spoke.

“...I haven't reached my end yet. No, let me rephrase that. Not here.”

“What did you just say?”

Niberis was surprised. Yuren had been half dead, yet his condition was rapidly changing. Power was being infused into his voice, and his body looked to be overflowing with energy.

‘Is it a regeneration ability? No, if he had that, he would have used it sooner. Then what is he... Mmmm?’

Soon, she realized what Yuren was doing. She was further taken aback by his actions.

“He called for a demon, and he let it in.... Is he nuts?”

A black smoke was gathering behind Yuren, and a figure was taking shape. It looked like a horribly deformed silhouette of a human. At the same time, an evil energy started to spread, and it was hard to breathe from just approaching the figure.

Niberis was someone, who played with the lives and souls of beings through black magic, yet her body was shaking. This was how deep this evil was.

Its hatred for all living creatures was so immense that it wanted to destroy the world.

It was a Demon.

Even the black magicians avoided approaching one, yet it was a being one must meet if one wanted to earn the knowledge of black magic. If not for a very specific situation, the Demons couldn't deliver their voices into this world. They didn't have any substance. There weren't much information known regarding the Demons, yet it was known that they possessed the source knowledge that was filled with evil and hatred.

“How funny.”

His brown hair was whipping about as his gray eyes started to turn red.

“You are from the Dragon Demon race, yet you are showing aversion to this being. What nonsense. The Dragon Demon race is the amalgamation of Dragons and Demons. The Demons are your father and mother.”

It was as he had said. The Dragons thirsted for knowledge, and the Demons pined for a physical body. The two sides fused to form

the Dragon Demon race. The first of the Dragon Demon race was Atein, and after his birth, a numerous number of the first generation Dragon Demons was born. Even now, such births may be occurring some place in this world.

Niberis glared at Yuren.

“You are right. However, great Dragon Demon King had spoken about this. The Demon race may be our father, but not all fathers deserve our admiration and love.”

“Yet you guys still exploit this relationship. Even now, you are throwing test subjects to the Demon race to earn more knowledge. Moreover, you are trying to create monster through this union, yet you dare to say such words?”

If one kept contact with the Demon race, it was like crawling into a swamp of destruction. When a normal human came in contact with a Demon, the human lost his mind, since he couldn't overcome the terrifying energy filled with malice and hatred. Still, there were a lot of cases where magicians sought knowledge and wisdom from the Demon race. They went in with plenty of preparation, yet their mind became unknowingly polluted. This made the magicians repeat unbelievably stupid acts as they were driven towards their destruction.

The Demon race loved powerful souls. When they were called into this world, these strong souls were able to resist their natural malice and hatred. However, the Demons worked towards corrupting and ruining these souls. It was the ultimate pleasure to eat these souls in the end.

However, it was also true that one could earn something really valuable in the process. This was why the Dragon Demon king worshippers gave humans and Dragon Majin to the Demons as commodity. The Dragon Demon king worshippers ‘farmed’ these knowledges from the Demons.

Yuren spoke.

“I’m the monster of your own creation... Actually, I wasn’t really raised as a test subject. Well, whatever. Just the thought of killing a direct descendant of the Dragon Demon king makes me elated.”

Yuren had called forth a Demon, and he was receiving power from it. It wouldn’t have been strange if he went mad, but surprisingly, Yuren had been successful in keeping control over his power. He converted the Demon’s power into his own magic.

Niberis’ expression turned cold.

“You don’t know your place.”

Ggwah-gwahng!

After the sound of an explosion rang out, both Yuren and Niberis took a step backwards.

The ruined ancient castle shook as stone dusts fell from the

ceiling. The two of them moved as if they were sliding across the floor, and they started exchanging flashy magical spells.

Paht! Pah-baht! Pah-pah-pah!

Each immense magical spells was powerful enough to kill each combatants a thousand times over. However, there was no outward phenomena occurring between them. The air shook, and a weak spark formed between them.

However, this was how a high level magical battle was fought. Before each other's magic could take form, they cut off the magic.

Kwah-kwah-kwahng!

Finally, an explosion occurred, and a hole was formed in the wall. Yuren and Niberis exited the ruins of the old castle.

Niberis made a cold assessment of Yuren's battle capability.

'In terms of magical energy, he exceeds me.'

Surprisingly, Yuren's magical energy exceeded a direct descendent of the Dragon Demon king. This was still true even if one took into account the fact that the Dragon Demon magic was much more effective than magic.

'Moreover, we are almost equal in terms of technique. How could



such a young human...’

To be precise, Yuren was better at fine control of magic, which needed only a small investment of power. On the other hand, Niberis was better at manipulating magic, which affected a large area. These kinds of magic required the investment of a lot of power.

Normally, Niberis would be at a disadvantage in such a situation, yet the battle was tight right now. This was true, because Yuren was in a tenuous situation.

“Kook.....!”

Yuren let out a groan. It was obvious that he was more skilled in focused magic. If he was steady in his progress, he would be able to dominate Niberis in all facets.

However, his control over his magic was becoming spotty. The cause was the Demon.

In the first place, it was considered impossible to receive power from a Demon, and control it. The fact that he was able to do it without being influenced by the Demon was commendable.

However, at the same time, he couldn’t prevent the Demon from eating away at him.

Niberis let out a cold smile.

“You were boasting about a power you cannot fully control... You are a failure as a magician.”

“I’m sad that I cannot refute those words. However, the Dragon Demon king’s direct descendent will die here today.”

Oh oh oh oh oh oh!

The shape wavering behind Yuren grew to twice its size. The evil demonic energy amplified by several orders, and it pushed forward as if to swallow Niberis’ Darkness.

“You plan on going for the winning move by hastening your own destruction?”

Yuren voluntarily took on a larger burden of hate and malice. It allowed him to bring out a much larger amount of power. The power was immense, yet if Niberis could maintain her defense, she’ll be able to see Yuren basically kill himself.

“I guess I’ll have to show you that I’m on a different level. What a foolish traitor.”

Niberis’ eyes shone. At the same time, the darkness around her swirled around as it surged forward.

She spoke with a dignified voice.

“Come! Come into the hands of your proper owner! Dragon Arts – Book of the Dark Soul.”

Koo-koo-koo-koong!

A black thunderbolt struck in front of her, and the evil energy that had been encroaching towards her was shredded to pieces.

# Chapter 97 – Those Who Seek Their Own Destiny (6)

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9

At that moment, Leticia was outside the castle with Duran. She was battling the forces being led by him.

She was leery about being separated from Yuren, but she had no choice. Yuren was in such poor shape, so she had hidden him before she stepped forward to fight.

However, she had observed the Magic Eyes being retracted, and an explosion came from within the castle. She knew there was a battle going on inside the castle.

His use of the Forbidden technique of summoning a Demon was probably a necessity.

Even though the situation had become chaotic and desperate, Leticia's cool-headedness never eroded. Duran was trying to confuse her senses by using Clones, but she blocked every one of Duran's sword strike with her spear.

Pah-ah-ah-ahng!

When the explosion rang out, Leticia had already bounced off Duran's sword, and at the same time, she showed off her intricate

control over her power by getting in a counter. Duran's shoulder protector was ripped away, and the cold energy gathered around this region.

“Hmmm.”

While the battle was ongoing, the surrounding had turned into a scene straight out of winter. She was called the Cold-blooded Queen, and she possessed Dragon Demon magic, which was on par with the high ranking Dragon Demon officers residing within the Plain of Darkness.

“As expected of the Dragon Demon King's dog, your sense of smell is quite keen. Yuren is great at covering his tracks, yet.....”

“Both of you will soon be dragged away like dogs.”

“Really? Your master is opposing someone that may have the means to kill her. ”

Both combatants could feel the clash of enormous powers nearby.

In such a situation, Leticia was not the one, who was restless. Unexpectedly, it was Duran, who felt restless. He trusted Niberis' power. However, at the same time, she was the daughter of Saibein, who had been Duran's savior. Niberis was the direct descendant of the exalted Dragon Demon King, and he was worried she would get hurt.

On contrast, Leticia was calm.

‘Yuren. If you die here... The guide in your dream was a trick used by the Demons to push you towards your own destruction.’

She didn’t fuss over something she had no control over. All she could do was to do her best in solving the problem in front of her eyes.

The two of them had been in an intense pursuit battle with the Dragon Demon king worshippers. It hadn’t been a wise decision for them to enter the County of Karzark. The Dragon Demon king worshippers always kept an eye on this land. Yuren and Leticia were well aware of this fact.

Still, Yuren insisted that he had to go to this place.

‘The guide within my dream said that I’ll meet my destiny here.’

...when she heard his words, Leticia thought really hard as to whether Yuren really had lost his mind. She had allied herself with him, because he had been too talented. Moreover, they had the same goal. She had assessed that he was of sane mind.

Had she been wrong?

Yuren insisted that the guide in his dream was instrumental in

him betraying the Dragon Demon king worshippers. He had been subjected to constant indoctrination, and the guide had been instrumental in him breaking the bonds of fanaticism. If Leticia didn't go with him, Yuren planned on going to the County of Karzark by himself. Leticia decided to gamble. She gave this mad plan a chance.

‘No matter how I look at this, this is crazy, but... If I was of sane mind, I wouldn't be fighting these bastards.’

If she thought about it carefully, Yuren was someone she should avoid getting close to even if he had betrayed the Dragon Demon king worshippers. Even if one needed a lot of power to go up against the Dragon Demon race, one shouldn't cross the line by calling a Demon into one's body. The Black magicians, who went this far, were considered to be a bad egg.

However, Yuren's intentions and actions were surprisingly just even if he had broken an evil taboo. This was why Leticia had accepted him as a comrade.

“Mmmm?”

Suddenly, Leticia trembled.

In the midst of her fierce battle, she felt the inflating magical energy of Yuren being ripped into pieces, and an oppressive Dragon Demon magic had exploded forth. Leticia let out a moan when she realized the identity of this energy.

“...Niberis possesses Dragon Demon Qi?”

It was an unexpected situation. Even at a glance, she had been able to tell Niberis was a scary opponent. However, she never expected her to possess Dragon Demon Qi. Yuren didn't stand a chance!

Kah-ahng!

Leticia charged Duran as she brought down her spear. The sword and the spear was interlocked with each other. Duran laughed.

“We'll see if each of us put our trust in the right place. The result will show us.”

“Hmm. Certainly.....”

However, Leticia's surprise was pushed down in an instant. After pushing back Duran, she spoke in an apathetic voice.

“Well, if he dies here, it is his fate..”

“.....”

Duran was taken aback. Were these two really comrades? Her comrade was in obvious danger, so how could she be so calm about it?



Leticia smiled. She had a savage smile of a predator.

“Once one enters into a battle as a combatant, one has to be responsible for one’s own life. I won’t fret over him as if he was a baby left by the river. I would be putting the cart before the horse, and it might result in my death.”

When one acknowledged each other as comrades, one also accepted the fact that one’s comrade might die. If a comrade died, the living member only had the obligation to take revenge for the dead.

Leticia had always fought with this mental attitude.

“We’ll see if his fate leads him to destruction or hope.... We’ll soon find out.”

After a brief moment, the Dragon Demon magic, which had been agitating her senses from afar, disappeared as if it had been a lie.

10

“.....”

Niberis couldn’t comprehend what had happened in front of her, so she was filled with confusion.

In front of her, there was a book floating in front of her, and it

possessed pages covered in pitch black darkness. This was Dragon Art's Book of the Dark Soul, which had been passed down from the Dragon Demon wars.

When she obtained this great relic, she was able to wield a different level of magical power. She had been in a tight battle with Yuren, but in an instant, she was able to overpower him. He had been wrecked by her.

When she was about to capture him, a sword appeared in front of her.

Hoo-ooh-ooh-ooh-ooh.....!

The sword had fallen in front of her like thunderbolt, and it ripped away the darkness formed by her. It wasn't as if an overwhelming strength had exploded onto the scene. The sword had flown in, and it cut off the swirling magical wave as if it had never existed. It was akin to a sword cutting a piece of paper....

She felt a chill.

Was such a thing really possible?

'This sword.....'

The sword possessed a white blade. At a glance, one could tell it wasn't made out of metal. It was made out of some other ingredient.

“It has been a while.”

Then she heard a familiar voice. It was a voice of a man she would never forget.

Niberis spoke with an angry voice towards the man, who was walking slowly towards her.

“Azell Zestringer.....!”

Confusion washed over her alongside her rage. Why was this man here? How come she hadn't received any information regarding his presence here?

The Dragon Demon king worshippers were on high alert regarding Azell's whereabouts. However, Azell and Kairen's movement speed transcended imagination. After they left the Dukedom of Tarantos, she had received no information from her observers.

“.....”

Silence descended between the two. The Dragon Sword embedded in the ground rose up into the air by itself, and it returned to Azell.

‘Even the Dragon Sword Duke....’

Niberis located Kairen, who was standing behind Azell. She wasn't in a good situation.

Azell suddenly spoke.

“It seems you gained a new Dragon Arts I've never seen you use. Since such a young Dragon Demon like you possesses Dragon Demon Qi, I'm guessing you inherited something that already existed. Actually, I remember that Dragon Demon Qi.”

Azell calmly looked over Niberis. Her Dragon Demon magic hadn't changed much. However, it was hard to assess how much energy a magician possessed unless one fought against one. However, the mere fact that she had gained the Dragon Arts meant that she would be able to wield a different level of power.

Azell spoke.

“Before I ask you why you are here... I'm curious about one thing.”

“Are we really in a situation where we can calmly answer each other's questions?”

“Were you guys responsible for destroying this land?”

Azell had ignored Niberis' sarcastic remarks, and he had asked

the question. Niberis looked straight into Azell's eyes, which was burning with anger, and she gave her answer.

“That's right.”

“As expected.....”

It was true that he had suspected the identity of culprits. Thirteen Dragons had suddenly rampaged in madness, and a large force of monsters had been ready to move into his land. It had been an unnatural event.

However, this wasn't the only reasons why Azell had suspected the Dragon Demon king worshippers. He knew it to be true when he learned that all the descendents of Count Karzark had been eradicated.

Even if the County of Karzark was destroyed, his descendents couldn't have all died. Of course, the women and the old would have been evacuated. Then there would have been some, who were out of the lands, at the time of the attack. So how could all of them be massacred so thoroughly?

Someone had taken advantage of the chaos created by the Great Darkness, and the downfall of the County of Karzark. If not, there was no way everyone would have died. The only likely suspect, who would do such a thing, was the Dragon Demon king worshippers.

Azell briefly closed his eyes as he spoke.

“Thank you.”

“What?”

Niberis was taken aback at his unexpected words. Azell spoke as he opened his eyes.

“I’ll be able to hate all of you with all my heart.”

Ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh!

A powerful magical wave was emitted from Azell. It was as if her senses was hit by a heavy sensation. When the magical wave reached her, Niberis trembled.

‘What the hell has he been doing?’

Azell’s magical energy couldn’t be compared to the last time she had seen him. His growth rate was unrivalled..

Unlike the Dragon Demons or the Dragon Majins, humans weren’t born with massive amounts of power. Instead, they were able to rapidly grow their power in a short amount of time. This held true for Spirit Order Practitioners and Magicians.

Still, there was a limit on how fast one could grow. It had only been 1 year, since she had seen him last. So how could his magical energy grow so much?

‘At the very least, he is a Septuple Master!’

Cold sweat ran down her body. Even when Azell had incomprehensibly low magical energy, he had been a threat.

How was he able to gain this much magic in only a year?

Niberis used her Communication magic to gather her underlings, and she got ready for battle.

It happened at that moment.

“Ah. It really...”

Yuren was lying next to Azell’s feet, and he spoke with a feeble voice.

“The guide’s words... He was right..... The fact that he was so accurate... Even if I’m the beneficiary of such information, I... don’t feel.... too good about it....”

“It would be best if you spare your words.”

Azell didn't even look at him as he spoke. Niberis was stoking her fighting spirit in front of him, so Azell couldn't reveal any openings in his defense.

“Ha ha ha... Thank... you... For worrying about me....”

“I don't know who you are. In truth, I don't like the fact that you stink of an evil energy, but.... You seem to be the enemy of my enemies, so I'll spare you. I'll give you a chance to explain yourself.”

Azell took a step forward. Kairen, who had silently stood behind Azell, took Yuren, and they retreated towards the back. After confirming their retreat, he spoke to Niberis.

“It is time for you to pay off your debts.”

“You took the words out of my mouth, the man whose name is seeped in sin.”

“I'm tired of being called by that long and unnecessary nickname. I'll make it so that you'll never utter those words again.”

A tumultuous killing intent exploded forth from Azell, and he charged toward Niberis.



# Chapter 98 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (1)

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1

During the Dragon Demon war, Azell had seen a lot of Dragon Demon weapons used. Both his allies and enemies wielded it.

Each of them had a unique form and ability. All of them were named, and they boasted incredible amounts of power. This was why Azell remembered every Dragon Demon weapon he had encountered before.

“That’s the Book of Darkness. The Simpleton Prince Saibein’s Dragon Demon weapon is still being passed around amongst you all?”

Saibein had been one of the sons of the Dragon Demon King.

The Dragon Demon weapon called Book of Darkness was something that had been used by Saibein. It allowed one to have control over Darkness, and there were all kinds of high rank magical spells engraved in it. It was a wonderful tool, which allowed one to carpet-bomb one’s enemies.

Niberis became angry at his words.

“You bastard! A young human like you dares to insult my father!”

“Mmm? You are the daughter of the Simpleton Prince? In the end, that guy lived long enough to leave behind a progeny? It is true that he was a simpleton, but he was always hard to kill.”

During the Dragon Demon Wars, the humans gave Saibein the nickname of the Simpleton Prince to ridicule him. It wasn't as if Saibein was weak. As befitting the son of the Dragon Demon King, he had incredible amount of Dragon Demon magic, and he was a naturally skilled magician.

However, Saibein's problem was the fact that he hadn't had any defining wartime accomplishments. It was true even when he had become the bait to lure out Azell's third master Liglan. He had always been defeated, and in turn, his pride had been trampled.

Until the Dragon Demon war ended, this remained true even after Saibein participated in multiple engagements. He was also grievously injured in the penultimate battle, so he hadn't even been present at the final battle. It seemed he had lived on in the Plain of Darkness.

Niberis exploded.

“You have yet to live a hundred years, yet you dare talk about my father as if you know him! I'll make you suffer. You will wish for your death!”

“I do know him? Is he perhaps still alive? If so, I want to meet him. I almost took off his head twice, but he threw away the lives

of his subordinates like it was nothing to be able to run away. This tactic was highly inconvenient, and in the end, I wasn't able to kill him."

"How much nonsense do you have to spout before you are satisfied!"

From within the darkness that had pervaded the surrounding, all kinds of magic exploded forth. Niberis' personal reservoir of Qi had increased compared to an year ago. On top of her development, she now had the Dragon Demon weapon called the Book of Darkness. She could use an incredible amount of power compared to her previous self.

Kwah kwah kwah kwah kwah!

The Darkness rose up like a tsunami, and the sounds of thunder rang out. The Book of Darkness allowed one to control the Darkness, and it was almost akin to a Dragon's control over an element it was born with. Its performance was almost unrivalled. Moreover, each of the magical spells engraved into the book was superb. One could become a one man army with this power.

This trove of power was released all at once.

The surging darkness swallowed up Azell, and all kinds of Curses and Destruction magic detonated within. No matter how talented he was, he wouldn't be able to come out intact under this level of firepower.

“...it really is an annoying item. I’ll admit that the Book of Darkness is quite high-powered. Its overwhelming firepower could simply crush an opponent..”

However, Azell’s voice could be heard over the thundering noises. Niberis unconsciously inhaled.

At the same time, blue thunder and lightning split the darkness.

It wasn’t natural phenomena. The thunderbolts were terrifyingly concentrated in a single location, and it looked like a sword. Thunderbolts split the darkness in half, and one could see Azell with his red hair whipping about.

The shocked Niberis heard an inconceivable string of words.

“Dragon Maken Rise!”

Accompanying Azell’s shout, the sky let out a roar.

Kwah-roo-roong! Ggwah-gwahng!

There had been no clouds in the sky, yet a thunderbolt erupted as it ripped away the darkness of the night. The thunderbolt struck the sword in Azell’s hand, and it connected the heaven and earth as one. In the midst of the exploding thunder, which didn’t allow other sounds to be heard, one could hear a psychic shout.

## -The Sword that Split the Heavens!

The name was apt. The thunderbolt split open the skies, and it resolved into a single sword. Thunderbolts condensed into forming this blue sword, and it was exactly the shape of the the Dragon Maken he had used to defeat the Earth Dragon at the Balan Forest.

However, the one from before had been an illusion. It hadn't possessed a real body. An unbelievable amount of power had been focused for the sword to take form, but it had been destined to fall apart. It didn't have its prior physical form to anchor into.

However, Azell had changed the sword's destiny. He had superimposed the Dragon Maken's image to the Dragon Sword, which was made out of the white bones of a Dragon.

When she saw it, she became scare out of her wits.

“No way! It can't be that sword...!”

Her surprise wasn't rooted only in the fact that Azell had a Dragon Demon weapon. If it was just the appearance of such a weapon, she wouldn't have been surprised to a degree where her thoughts briefly shorted out.

The problem was the name. Azell had called forth the Dragon Demon weapon with his will, and he had used its true name. It was a nightmare of a name for the Dragon Demon king worshippers. It haunted them in their dreams.

The Dragon Demon weapon wasn't named by its User. All Dragon Demon weapons possessed a true name as soon as it was born.

Ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh.....!

Niberis was frozen in shock, but the Book of Darkness in front of her reacted. Niberis didn't do anything, yet the book trembled before the pages started to flip over. From Niberis' perspective, she felt as if the Book of Darkness was trying to express some unknown feeling.

Azell laughed as he gripped the Dragon Maken in front of him.

“Well, from now on, it is up to you to determine if I'm talking bullshit or not. This Dragon Maken has ripped apart the Book of Darkness twice before in a fight with the Simpleton Prince. Shall we see what'll happen when I rip it apart for the third time?”

2

The Dragon Demon castle was located far in the north within the Plain of Darkness. The first wife of the Dragon Demon king was submerged within the great magic of Darkness. Aincera opened her eyes in surprise.

The great Darkness was spread around her at all times. It was a magic taught to her by the Dragon Demon King Atein. She didn't

even need to take a single step, yet she was able to communicate with all Dragon Demon king worshippers. She could survey all parts of the continent, and its power was instrumental in maintaining and hiding relics like the Road of Emptiness. It was a transcendental magic.

Within this magic, Aincera was like a goddess, who was able to hear the prayers of her numerous followers. No, to be precise, this magic was a proxy that allowed the prayers of the humans to reach the goddess.

Moreover, this magic's utility wasn't limited to communication. In the beginning, Aincera had set up a bank of knowledge when she incubated this magic. It was able to find information as if it was prescience.

The Dragon Demon king worshippers were connected by darkness, and everything they saw, heard and thought was sent to her. Then she was able to bring up relevant information from memory bank.

This all resulted in her being able to coordinate the eradication of knowledge amongst the humans. Everything regarding the technique of Dragon Arts, Spirit Order and the Dragon Demon weapons were all....

Aincera mumbled as if she was groaning.

“The Sword that Split the Heavens. How could that cursed Dragon Demon weapon show up again?”

There was a price exacted from her for harboring this great Darkness within her. It was as if she had stolen a part of a power of a god, yet it also put her in a half-dead state.

Aincera's self was buried within this sea-like consciousness, and her sense of self had become faint. She was only able to operate, because she had been obsessed with her principles, and she had the overwhelming will to live.

Of course, her emotions had faded away as if it had be cut away. No matter what business came up, she dealt with it in a indifferent manner.

However... She remembered the memories stamped into her memories 200 years ago, and the terror she felt couldn't be erased.

“The Sword that Split the Heavens?”

“The Dragon Demon weapon of the great sinner has appeared?”

“That cannot be.”

Shocked voices was flying towards her from everywhere on the continent. The magic allowed them to ignore the vast distance, and it was as if they were all gathered in the same room. They were all feeling the same emotion.



Fear.

The moment the Dragon Demon weapon was born Aincera knew about it. The being connected to the great Darkness encountered the Dragon Demon weapon, and she was now aware of this fact.

This was why Aincera was able to look up the identity of the Dragon Demon weapon encountered by Niberis.

The Sword that Split the Heavens.

This was the weapon swung by the hero Azell Karzark in the Dragon Demon war. In the end, this weapon was used to end the life of the Dragon Demon king Atein. It was name of the Dragon Maken.

3

Azell had received several Dragon Demon weapons from his third master Liglan. However, he only had one Dragon Demon weapon he had created for himself. It was the ‘Sword that Split the Heavens.’

Azell hadn’t created the Dragon Maken in his hands anew. He just recovered the one from before.

Carlos had used a surprising magic to preserve his sword, while Azell slept. However, when he went through with the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual with the Earth Dragon inside the Balan forest, he

had consumed all the power needed to maintain the existence of the sword. It disappeared.

However, when he went through his second Dragon Slayer's ritual, he found the fragments of the sword still existing within his Energy Pulse. The reason why he hadn't been able to discover this fact was simple. Azell had been short on Dragon Demon magic. If one didn't have Dragon Demon magic, it was impossible to form or maintain the Dragon Demon qi. This was why he had the fragments within his Energy Pulse, but these fragments were destined to slowly dissolve since nothing was maintaining it.

However, when Azell completed the second Dragon Slayer's ritual, he changed the fate of the sword. When he realized this fact, he attempted a third Dragon Slayer's Ritual, while he resided at the Dukedom of Tarantos. He won, and he had gained a powerful source of Dragon Demon magic.

This resulted in him being able to gather the fragments existing within his Energy Pulse, and he had revived the Dragon Maken.

However, the problem was its incomplete revival. The Sword that Split the Heavens was considered to be one of the top Dragon Demon weapons.

Azell was able to gain a considerable amount of Dragon Demon magic through his third Dragon Slayer's Ritual, but he couldn't fully revive his sword.

It would only be possible if he conducted more Dragon Slayer's

Ritual. However, the Dragon Slayer's Rituals wasn't something that should be done in a short amount of time. If he was able to do so, Azell would have travelled the entire country looking for Dragons. He would have done Dragon Slayer's Rituals with a fearsome fervor.

During the Dragon Demon war, there were two reasons why the beings with the Dragon Demon weapons didn't blindly conduct the Dragon Slayer's Ritual.

First. If one hadn't digested the Dragon's power before doing another Dragon Slayer's Ritual, the Dragon could steal the power residing in the human.

Second. When the human attempting the Dragon Slayer's Ritual increased in the amount of Dragon Demon magic one possessed, the Dragon seemed to respond by getting stronger. Basically, even if one obtained a Dragon Demon weapon through multiple Dragon Slayer's Ritual, the difficulty level of the fights with the Dragons never decreased.

Carlos had a theory regarding why it was so.

'It may be, because the Dragon Demon magic's originates from the Dragons. Dragon Demon magic allows the Dragons to control reality through their will. Moreover, they are able to freely control the element they have affinity with. There is a connection between these two abilities.'

The Dragon Slayer's Ritual was a life and death fight between a

Dragon and a human. However, it was also a conversation between their souls. The winner took the loser's wisdom or power. The fact that this was possible in the first place meant that they were dealing with a magic that transcend common sense.

## Chapter 99 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (2)

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‘When one initiates the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, the transcendent magic joins the soul of the human and the Dragon into one. In the process, the will of the human that controls the Dragon Demon magic gets pulled towards the Dragon’s will. This occurs since the Dragon is closer to the source of the magic.’

Of course, this was an unproven theory. Still, it did a semi-decent job in explaining the phenomena of the Dragon Slayer’s Ritual.

After Azell finished his third Dragon Slayer’s Ritual, he put all his effort into digesting the power he had gained. As he was doing this, he kept thinking of a way to completely materialize the Dragon Maken. However, it was Kairen, who had come up with the answer.

‘You are running into the limitation of materializing power into an ethereal form. What if you prepare a separate vessel you can pour the power into?’

When he heard those words, a lightning went off inside Azell’s head.

Kairen was someone, who had made a Dragon Sword, from reading an incomplete account of the Dragon Demon weapons. He had a unique perspective, and he had come up with the idea. Azell used Kairen’s idea as a guideline, and he researched for a way to materialize the Dragon Maken through the Dragon Sword. In the

end, he was successful.

The sword he was holding at that moment was the result. In the past, it had been the source of terror for the Dragon Demon king's army. Azell once again wielded the proud power of his Dragon Maken.

Niberis asked a question.

“...the one with the name soaked in sin. What is your real identity?”

“I'll ask again. Is Saibein still alive?”

Instead of answering Azell's question, she asked a question of her own. She furrowed her brows.

“What is your purpose in asking this question?”

“I'm just curious. No, this really isn't a question specifically about Saibein. I wonder how many of your members are survivors from the Dragon Demon war?”

The Dragon Demons had long lifespans, so there was a possibility that some were still alive. This was the reasoning behind Azell's question.

Of course, Niberis didn't answer his question. He looked at her

for a brief moment before he spoke.

“I guess it isn’t information that can be easily given away. Then I’ll phrase it this way. I want you to deliver this message to those, who are still alive. If they are curious about my identity, they can move their fat asses, and come meet me. Then you’ll be able to clear up this confusion. You can get the answer from them.”

The gust infused with blue sparks swirled around him. Azell spoke in a cold voice.

“Ah, sorry. I just realized I said something unnecessary. You are the daughter of the Simpleton Prince. You will die here today.”

“You are the one, who will die. You’ll be killed as you clutch at your own riddles! Oh, human with the name soaked in sin!”

The Dragon Demon weapon clashed with the other Dragon Demon weapon. Kairen was a Dragon Demon, but even he was having a hard time breathing. The waves of powerful Dragon Demon magic swirled around the surrounding. The Darkness swallowed everything nearby, and the thunderbolts let out a ferocious roar as if it was going to rip the world into pieces.

4

Ggwah-gwah-gwah-gwahng! Ggwah-gwah-gwahg!

The darkness and lightning collided violently with each other.

The two power intermingled as the explosions rocked the ground. A single clash laid waste a radius 100 meters. Kairen, who was running away with Yuren on his shoulders, was shocked.

“Kook! What preposterous amount of power!”

Kairen had always thought he could beat anyone in terms of burst damage. However, the aftermath created by the Dragon Demon weapons clashing against each other was beyond his imagination.

Niberis’ shout rang out within the large dust storm.

“I invoke the bountiful spirit, which possesses the endless darkness of the nether world! I call upon the soul that runs across the firmament of darkness that covers the sun!”

When she shouted the spell, her surrounding started to change. If one didn’t actively protect oneself against the magical energy, the Broken Soul Curse would overpower the opponent’s mind. The curse had the power to shatter the mind.

Hoo-ooh-ooh-ooh.....!

The darkness started to spread out like a fog, and everything it touched died. Moreover, numerous tormented phantoms rose out of the fog as they wailed.

Kairen stopped breathing.



“My god.”

He had fought a lot of Black magicians up until now. He was also very experienced in fighting very strong Dragon Demon king worshippers. Moreover, his best friend was Beorein Michael, who was the kingdom's best magician. He was familiar with how much power was generated by the high rank magical spells.

However... The phenomena unfolding in front of him far outstripped any magic he had experienced for the past 100 years of his life.

‘What about Azell?’

His opponent was using an incredible magic spell, so why was Azell not doing anything? Kairen looked into the darkness with this question on his mind. However, he soon understood why Azell hadn't stopped Niberis from activating her magic..

Pah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!

An intense lightning pierced through the pervading darkness. It look like thunder, but it also looked like a pure white flame. It split open the darkness in a domineering fashion, and Azell appeared from within it.

He spoke with a certain perverse humor in his voice.

“That move is fantastic. It was a good enough distraction to buy some time for you. You are much proficient in summoning the Corrupted Body now. You’ve grown more adept.”

Purple flames rose in the darkness, and the shapes of all kinds of monsters were disintegrating through this flame. The Corrupted Energy was formed using the pain and hatred of the dead. It melted the bodies of the monsters, and the Black magic created a familiar called the Corrupted Body.

Niberis created numerous Corrupted Bodies, and they clutched at Azell’s ankles. It didn’t take Azell long to defeat the Corrupted Bodies, but it was enough time for Niberis to finish her magical spell.

“Queen of Darkness.”

Ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh!

Accompanying her low chant, the darkness focused around her. It was as if several hundred evil spirits were celebrating the birth of a powerful ruler. She floated in the sky amongst the wails....

Pah-hahk!

Before the Queen could put on her crown, the blue blade passed by her after slicing her open.

“How... How can this be...?”

Niberis was shocked.

She had no idea that the attack was coming. Azell and the Dragon Maken rose out of the darkness to cut her.

This shouldn't have been possible. She was a magician, who used the darkness as her source. Moreover, she was the owner of the Book of Darkness, which dominated the darkness. The darkness had spread out to the surrounding, and she should have been able to sense everything within the darkness. Even if it was a small bug, it couldn't escape her awareness.

However, she hadn't realized the attack was coming until Azell had been right in front of her. Moreover, Azell had been fighting against the Corrupted Bodies, so how was he able to jump a distance of over 100 meters?

He had used the secret technique called 'The Dance of Shadows.' It allowed one to give substance to clones. The Dragon Arts users called it Incarnation, and this technique completely fooled Niberis' eyes.

"As expected, you are still very clumsy at using Saibein's Book of Darkness. I'm guessing you received the Dragon Demon weapon not too long ago?"

As Azell spoke, the Dragon Maken struck out against her. The sword descended like lightning. The blue lightning ripped apart the darkness as it descended.

Too-hahk!

However, something obstructed the path of the sword. The sword had descended as if it could split apart anything in this world, yet the sword bounced off after colliding with something.

“You haven’t changed at all. You are a mere book, yet it is admirable that you continue to protect your master.”

It was the Book of Darkness. Niberis had been taken by surprise, and she had received a critical wound. The Book of Darkness had blocked Azell’s sword to protect Niberis.

“How many strikes will you be able to take this time?”

He had experienced this before, so Azell wasn’t surprised. He didn’t even hesitate. He attacked again.

Ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh!

Every sword strike was tearing the Book of Darkness into shreds. Azell didn’t even bother trying to bypass the Book of Darkness to strike out at Niberis. The darkness spread out by the Book of Darkness could be used freely by it. It could dissolve and materialize at will in this darkness. It could basically achieve the effect of crossing over space to teleport.

This was why he had to destroy it with strength.

Niberis executed a sudden attack on the occupied Azell.

Goo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....!

She hadn't been able finish the great magic 'Queen of Darkness', but the magic allowed her to overcome the exquisite pain caused by her wound.

The powerful darkness stopped her bleeding, and it maintained her vitals for now.

When Niberis was able to focus her faint mind, she immediately went on the offensive. The surrounding darkness was condensed into a dense Curse as it was sent towards Azell.

At the same time, she witnessed something unbelievable.

'A human turned into darkness?'

Azell seemed to change into the same element as the Curse of Darkness. The attack that should have easily destroyed his body and soul passed through him.

The only thing that ceased to exist was the Dragon Maken.

Azell returned to his original form, and he gripped the Book of Darkness with his hands.

His action was pure madness. Even for a man like Azell, it was suicide to grab an enemy's Dragon Demon weapon.

Pah-jee-jee-jee-jeek!

As expected, a strong reaction occurred as Azell's body shook. His body broke apart into particles of light. Niberis eyes were opened so wide that it felt as if her eyes would rip open.

“Ah. Did you really think that was my real body? You are more naive than I thought.”

“What... did you just.....?”

Niberis was so surprised that words refused to come out of her mouth.

Then another powerful light split apart the darkness. The fruits of her Curse, which was scattered all over the place, was shredded to pieces as if they were pieces of paper. Another Azell appeared using the Instantaneous Movement, and Niberis was finally able to piece everything together.

‘From the beginning to the end.... I moved to the beck and call of that man!’

Azell had been able to change himself into a particular element using a technique akin to Insulation. However, there was limit to such techniques. It was impossible to do what Azell had just done. He had let the Cursed Darkness flow through him by turning himself fully into the same element.

However, such a deed was possible if it was a clone made only out of magical energy.

After Azell changed his clone into the same element as the Cursed Darkness, he hid within the Darkness being gathered by Niberis to complete her magic. He had approached her in secret. His skills were so intricate that she hadn't notice his actions.

After the Dragon Maken sliced through Niberis, it was sent to the hands of his clone. Like the Book of Darkness, the Dragon Maken could also dissolve and materialize at will. The Sword that Splits the Heaven could freely be sent to any one of his clones.

“Your life span would be considered to be short for a Dragon Demon, yet haven't you lived long enough? It is time for you to go meet Atein, who you worship so much, in hell.”

Azell's clone used the destruction of itself to seal the power of the Book of Darkness. Niberis, who had vainly spent her power, saw Azell's final strike come down towards her head.

She couldn't do anything. The despairing Niberis watched as the death strike fell towards her.

# Chapter 100 – The Sword That Split The Heavens (3)

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5

“Niberis!”

...it seemed she had lost her consciousness for a brief moment.

Niberis’ consciousness kept blinking in and out as she heard a familiar voice. It was a voice infused with genuine concern. It was a voice she tolerated with discomfort since her childhood.

“Niberis! Wake up! Please!”

“Kier... en.....”

Niberis looked at him with blurry eyes. The young Dragon Demon was Kieren Baldazark. He was her rival, and he was the descendent of one of the four exalted Dragon Demon Generals. He looked as if he was about to cry as he called out her name.

‘Why is he here.....’

Ooh ooh ooh ooh ooh.....

At the same time, she realized the space around her was



distorted. There was only one person she knew that could create such a phenomena. When she realized this fact, she suddenly felt annoyed even if she was close to her death.

“Laura.....”

“Yes. Laura, Sir Almarick and I are here! Hold on! If you die, I...!”

“Duke Baldazark.”

Kieren spoke as if he was about to cry, but Laura cut through his words. Laura’s voice was monotone as always, but Kieren could felt nervousness behind her words.

This space was made using Laura’s Dragon Demon weapon called Vitan’s Chalice. The Vitan’s Maze was an isolated pocket dimension. Since she created a spatial distortion, this place couldn’t be reached from outside.

Basically, the Vitan’s Maze offered complete safety when it was put in place. It was a bit problematic when one had to get out, but once you were in there....

Laura, who had her Vitan’s Maze engaged, spoke as her expression stiffened.

“Hurry up. Bring out your Dragon Demon weapon.”

“What?”

“I can’t hold out much longer.”

Koo-goo-goo-goo-goo.....!

The Vitan’s Maze, which was isolated from the world, started to shake. Kieren was shocked.

“What? Is he perhaps intruding into the Vitan’s Maze?”

“We were tracked down.”

“How is this possible?”

“It is possible. I don’t have time to explain it. Hurry...!”

“Kook! I am the true descendant of the beings, who was born into the world without parents! I call for you to obey my call! The Dragon Demon weapon bleeds....!”

Kieren didn’t know what was going on, but he followed Laura’s instruction. Before he could fully bring out his Dragon Demon weapon, thunder exploded around him.

Kwah-ahhhhhhhhhh!

The pocket dimension, which had safely sealed them away, was ripped apart. A calamity of light akin to a thunderbolt connected the heaven and earth. The darkness of the night sky was violently ripped away as a blue colored sword impacted on the ground.

Kieren yelled out.

“The Sword that Split the Heavens.....!”

It matched the description passed down in the Plain of Darkness. It was the weapon that took the Dragon Demon King Atein’s life. Then there was the four Dragon Demon Generals. They were beings, who came into this world without being born to parents, and they tried to change the fate of the world. However, they had been afraid of this particular weapon.

The Vitan’s Maze crumbled away as the surrounding returned to normal.

Azell appeared from the rear with his red hair swirling around him. He spoke as he looked at the Dragon Demons, who had been within the Vitan’s Maze.

“In truth, I’m impressed. You timed it perfectly.”

When Azell unleashed his final blow against Niberis, the Vitan’s Maze was activated, and Niberis was sequestered into the pocket dimension. Laura and Kieren was still 1 kilometers away from Niberis, yet she was able to take into account the distance in using

her magic. She was skilled and it was quite admirable.

“You isolated space to make a pocket dimension. However, that space has to exist somewhere.”

The method in creating spatial distortion and the pocket dimension was different. The concept behind Vitan’s Maze was to distort the configuration of space. If one entered from the outside, the maze would trap all visitors in an endless maze.

Azell had fought Aunsaurus in the Dragon Demon wars. Moreover, the so-called impregnable Vitan’s Maze had been broken several times by Azell.

Laura mumbled to herself as if she was groaning.

“Speed of light.....”

“It seems the knowledge about the Sword that Split the Heavens was passed down amongst you.”

“It is a sword of calamity, and it can control all of the world’s light. It can control the light from the sun, the flame from the volcanoes, and the roaring thunder within the storm.”

“You are quite ostentatious in your descriptions. Well, it is understandable. This sword killed your god, so I can understand why you would add such descriptions to it.”

The Sword that Split the Heavens was a Dragon Demon weapon he had completed as he matured. When he first made the Dragon Demon weapon, it only had the power to control thunderbolts, which he had used for long ranged attacks. However, as he went through the gauntlet of battles in the Dragon Demon war, his sword was refined. It grew into becoming the ultimate weapon capable of defeating the Dragon Demon King. This had been possible through Azell's efforts, and the sacrifices of his comrades.....

The Sword that Split the Heavens controlled light.

It could control thunder. Moreover, it could gather all existing light within his domain to convert it into an offensive energy. Moreover, when the sword itself turned into light, it could break all shackles of limitation for a brief moment.

Kieren asked a question.

“What is he saying?”

“The Vitan's Maze cannot transcend the limitation of my perception.”

Laura spoke as cold sweat ran down her body.

Even if she isolated a large amount of space using the Vitan's Maze, she was creating the space within the limited region within

her perception. Even if she created a castle wall where one needed several days of running to reach the end, her opponent could just use the light from the sky to cut through her space.

Laura was able to assess this problem, so she had tried to use the property of light against Azell. She knew light travelled in straight lines, so he kept changing the location of her space to block the Sword that Split the Heavens. However, her efforts had been futile. The Sword that Split the Heavens could scatter numerous light particles, and it allowed Azell to trace any beings if light was able to reach them.

Kieren had been a step slow in realizing this fact. He spoke with a shaking voice.

“So the sword can really split the heavens....”

“Mmmm? Are you perhaps the descendant of Baldazark?”

Azell tilted his head as he looked at Kieren. Niberis was of a different sex as Saibein, and Laura also looked different Aunsaurus. However, Kieren’s outer appearance and voice was almost a carbon copy of Baldazark.

Kieren asked in surprised.

“How did you know?”

“I knew it by your appearance. Saibein’s daughter, Aunsaurus’

grandchild and Baldazark's scion.... Did all the Dragon Demons of note and the small fries gather here today?

When the Vitan's Maze was broken, three young Dragon Demons was returned to normal space. They returned to a location where a large number of Dragon Demon king worshippers were gathered.

There was the group being led by Duran, and they had been fighting Leticia. Then there was the group brought here by Laura and Kieren. There was a total of 120 Dragon Demon king worshippers present, and all of them were quite proficient at fighting.

They had an absolute numerical advantage. However, Azell didn't even show an ounce of nervousness as he asked a question.

“How long will it take for our allies to get here?”

“I'm not sure. This land is rarely seen by the gazes of man, so the response may be sluggish. They are usually really good at showing up when they aren't needed....”

“I agree. They are like perverts, who like to stalk. If so, why the hell are they so late? They are useless.”

Azell and Kairen was talking about the Guardian Shadows. There wasn't much of a population within the County of Karzark, so the surveillance net was thin here. However, Kairen was a member of the Guardian Shadows. Since he witnessed the Dragon Demon king

worshippers, the Guardian Shadows would know about it. It was a matter of time before they got here.

Kairen didn't show any outwards signs, but he asked Azell a question through Whispering.

-How much reserve do you have left?

Azell showed off a fearsome god-like power, yet this power wasn't endless. Azell spoke.

-The Dragon Maken I called forth is starting to reach its limit. Moreover, the Dragon Sword is groaning under the stress.

The cheat-like Dragon Maken he called forth had a time limit. The Dragon Sword had become the vessel for his power, yet it couldn't channel that power indefinitely.

On top of that fact, the use of the Dragon Maken put quite a lot of burden on Azell too. Azell hadn't been able to complete his recovery yet.

-However, I have plenty enough to kill all these bastards.

-Hmm. Then I'll focus my power on protecting this guy.

Kairen spoke as he unsheathed his dual swords. Yuren was at Kairen's feet.



Then they naturally came to a realization that a female Dragon Majin was showing her back to them. She was a Dragon Majin with short, black and wavy hair. It was Leticia. She asked Kairen a question.

“Is he dead?”

“If you mean the magician, he is still alive.”

“It seems he wasn’t destined to die. Then let me ask you another question. I don’t know who you are, but are you an ally?”

“I want to pose the same question to you as an answer, but... Since we have common enemies, you can join our side until the end of this fight. We can talk about our interests afterwards.

“Such a generous answer. It almost makes me tear up. All right. Let’s do that.”

Leticia let out a snort. Then she let out a tumultuous killing intent towards the other side.

“However, I never expected to see Duke Almarick here. I would have never imagined it. Is this the destiny Yuren was talking about?

Her gaze was focused on a being with long, blue-black hair. It had

horns that made him look like a black bull. This particular Dragon Demon youth possessed yellowish brown eyes and Dragon Demon Stone. He was like Kieren and Laura. He was the descendent of 'The Sword that parts a storm' Almarick, and his name was Jeffers Almarick.

Azell tilted his head in confusion at her words.

“Mmm? This guy is Almarick’s descendent?”

“You are only a lowly human, yet you dare speak his name?”

Jeffers words revealed his disdain of Azell. He hadn’t been inside the Vitan’s Maze, so he hadn’t witnessed Azell’s god-like powers. If he had seen it, he wouldn’t have been able to maintain such an attitude.

Azell smiled as he revealed his teeth.

“You are quite the prototypical Dragon Demon. However... Why don’t you look anything like Almarick?”

“What?”

“The scion of Baldazark looks like that git. He looks exactly like the foppish Baldazark. However, you don’t share any common features with your predecessor.”

“What nonsense are you spouting?”

“Now that I think about it, the only thing different about Aunsuarus’ descendent is her gender. As the daughter of the Simpleton Prince, they look very alike. However, this isn’t true for you. You are the only one that doesn’t look like your predecessor. Don’t you think that’s strange?”

“Bastard! You are a being from the gutters, yet you dare to insult me using such baseless conjectures?”

Jeffers raged. However, Azell didn’t back off from his taunts. From what he remembered, Almarick had long, dirty white hair. His eyes had been bright red, and his thick horns had the consistency of volcanic rocks. He had been a middle-aged Dragon Demon, who looked like a savage lion. No matter how he looked at it, Jeffers didn’t look anything like Almarick.

If the other Dragon Demons hadn’t looked like their predecessors, he wouldn’t have remarked on it. However, Niberis, Laura and Kieren looked similar to the Dragon Demons of old.

‘Why is he different?’

He was having a hard time letting go of this incongruity . When Azell furrowed his brows, Kieren spoke.

“Duke Almarick. That man is strong. You have to use your Dragon Demon weapon.”

“What are you talking about? I have to use my Dragon Demon weapon facing a lowly human?”

“Listen to my words carefully. Niberis lost to him even after using her Dragon Demon weapon.”

“What nonsense are you.....!”

“He’s coming.”

In a flash, Laura stretched out her hand to activate her barrier. By a hair’s breadth, she was able to divert the sharp light emitted by the sword towards an entirely different direction.